

# Richard Hooker Wilmer

## Second Bishop of Alabama



Walter C. Whitaker



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**Richard Hooker Wilmer, second bishop of**



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RICHARD HOOKER WILMER



# Richard Hooker Wilmer

SECOND BISHOP OF ALABAMA

## A BIOGRAPHY

BY

WALTER C. WHITAKER

RECTOR OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE



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## PREFATORY NOTE

Occasionally some man arises, does his life work, and passes, whose personality is so striking, or whose character is so strong, or whose destiny is to be a chief actor in so important a work or period, that simple justice to those who come after, demands that they shall have the benefit and inspiration of his example.

Of such sort was the second Bishop of Alabama. The only Bishop consecrated in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America, the man upon whom in the providence of God it devolved to make the fight in these United States for the independence and supremacy of the Church in things spiritual, and the last of that era in which the individuality of the Bishop so often dominated and overshadowed the individuality of the Diocese, he was peculiarly fitted by God and by his own corresponding efforts to perform well the tasks assigned him and to carry himself through all events.

The consecration to God's service of the life of a full-blooded young man, the undaunted courage with which for ten years this young man fought against a break-down that threatened to blight his whole ministry, the self-forgetfulness with which

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he apparently threw away valuable years that he might do pioneer work for the Kingdom of God, the dignity with which he took up the unexpected responsibilities of the bishopric, the clear-headed courage with which he addressed himself to the problems of Church and State which immediately confronted him, the patience with which he toiled and waited for the long arrested development of his Diocese, the self-restraint which took a naturally destructive wit and bent it, not to self-pleasing but to the advancement of the cause of Jesus Christ—all these matters are well worth the recounting for the instruction and encouragement they bear in the telling.

Not of his own motion did the writer of this volume undertake the telling. He knew the Bishop well, and saw much of him and served under him for many years. But he perceived that it is impossible for a young man to retrace the life of one whom he knew only in old age and to delineate to the satisfaction of life-long friends those subtle elements of head and heart that make the essential man and draw men to him.

The author would not have yielded to solicitation had it not been for a feeling that the work had been delayed long enough, and had not the Reverend Richard Wallace Hogue, of Wilmington, North Carolina, already collected many most valuable documents and letters without which a biography would have been attempted in vain.

More than two years passed after the beginning was made. Progress was slow on account of the

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incessant demands of a parochial ministry. The inevitable delay has not been without good result along several lines, chiefly that it has developed much new material and has given opportunity for the accurate checking of much that had been written out from the memory of personal conversations.

The book has been written almost entirely from original sources of information and in great part from unpublished manuscript of the Bishop himself. Of course, Bishop Meade's "Old Families and Churches of Virginia," and Dr. Packard's "Reminiscences" have been drawn upon in the early chapters. Chapter VIII is based upon a verbatim report of the debates in the General Convention of 1865. Some newspaper stories have been used, but only when verified: and many of these, mutilated and garbled, have been restored to their original form. With scarcely an exception quotation marks indicate the use of manuscript in the handwriting of the person quoted.

The most generous help has been given in the collection of material and the criticism of result. Thanks are due to Reverend R. W. Micou, of the Theological Seminary of Virginia, the Reverend H. R. Carson of Louisiana, and the Reverend P. P. Phillips, of Alexandria, Virginia, and the rector and vestry of Christ Church, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, for placing especially valuable documents at the writer's disposal. Others to whom he is no less grateful for valuable aid have expressly asked that public acknowledgment be not made.

It is unfortunate that the portrait of a man must

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be the man, not as he really is, but as he appears to the artist. The qualities that to one would seem dominant to another fall into the background. Bishop Wilmer would appear a somewhat different man had this biography been written by another. Still, the likeness is not necessarily lost because the sense of proportion varies. The writer trusts that he has not marred the impression of rectangular massiveness, that he has sought to convey as the chief characteristic of Richard Hooker Wilmer.

WALTER C. WHITAKER.



# RICHARD HOOKER WILMER

## CHAPTER I

### WHO THE WILMERS WERE

The Wilmers of England were country gentlemen, and, being country gentlemen, were Royalists. From the earliest days they were loyal to constituted authority and opposed to enforced conformity to any arbitrary code of morals. When Charles I was beheaded and Cromwell became Protector of England they were forced to join in the Cavalier emigration of 1649-1659 in order to escape the tender mercies of Puritan intolerance. They settled on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and there remained for more than a hundred and fifty years.

The head of the American branch, Simon Wilmer, was elected one of the vestrymen of St. Paul's Parish, New Kent County, on January 24th, 1693. He represented Kent in the Maryland Legislature of 1698. Six generations bring the family down to Richard Hooker. The heads of four of these generations were named Simon, the two exceptions being the son of the original Simon, who was named Lambert, and the father of the Bishop of Alabama, who was named William Holland. The home of the family was from an early date known as "White House Farm."

There were always clergymen in the family, and of

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Simon, the grandfather of Richard Hooker, there are many traditions showing his fearlessness in dealing with the rougher element of his Parish and the drinking habits which were then so common. It is related that when he was called to a certain Parish he found that it was a custom to have all the children christened at home, where the service was followed by much feasting and drinking. In vain he appealed to the people to bring the children to church. In vain he preached against the unholy custom of the neighborhood of turning a religious service into the occasion for a carousal. He even declared that in future he would not baptize in private. However, he electrified his congregation one Sunday by announcing that he had changed his mind in regard to baptizing in private, and that thereafter he would be very glad to baptize a child at home whenever there was any question of its legitimacy. Tradition says that there was a rush of parents and infants to the church after this.

William Holland Wilmer, father of the Bishop of Alabama, and fifth son of Simon and Ann Ringgold Wilmer, was born at the ancestral home in Maryland, October 29th, 1782. He was one of three brothers, all of whom entered the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and one of whom, another Simon, was father of Joseph Pere Bell Wilmer, Bishop of Louisiana. He was educated at Washington College, Kent County, and ordained in 1808 by Bishop Claggett, and for several years had charge of his parish at Chestertown. At the age of thirty, having then been four years in the ministry, he removed to

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Virginia at the instance of Mr. (afterward Bishop) Meade, and became Rector of St. Paul's, Alexandria, (1812). He was pre-eminent for ability and zeal. He had a strong body, a clear mind, and a good heart, and he gave himself up unreservedly to the work which he had undertaken.

That work was nothing less than the rehabilitation of the Church in Virginia. Her prestige as the "Established Church" having been lost after the Revolution, and her endowments swept away only ten years before Wilmer's coming, the Virginia Church was indeed poor and dispirited. As soon as their "living" was taken from them the clergy in large numbers forsook the ministry, and turned to secular callings, and, in some cases, to loose living. Only thirteen could be assembled at the Diocesan Convention of 1812, and when the depressed little company adjourned they did not expect ever to meet in Convention again. The laity were even more indifferent and in some neighborhoods, if we may accept apparently well-authenticated stories, did not seem especially shocked that a neglected or stolen chalice became the wine cup at a drinking bout, that cheese was passed about on a paten abstracted from the church locker, and that a marble font was used as a horse trough. When William Meade was made Deacon, the year before Wilmer came, "no minister had been ordained for years, save one unworthy fellow, and it was a passing wonder to the people that a young man of good family, an educated man, a graduate of Princeton, should enter the ministry of the Episcopal Church!"

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Bishop Madison died the year Wilmer came to Virginia, and two years elapsed before the Diocese could be persuaded to elect a successor to him. Mr. Wilmer had been elected President of the Standing Committee of the Diocese on May 25th, 1813,—his first Convention in Virginia,—and by virtue of his office he presided over the Convention of 1814, which elected William Channing Moore of New York, Bishop. He was largely instrumental in bringing about any election at all, and in securing the election of Bishop Moore. He stirred the hearts of his hearers by his Convention sermon, in which he plead eloquently for the arising of the Church from her death-like sleep to a new and consecrated energy in setting forward the rule of Jesus Christ and the interests of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

He did not content himself with exhorting. He worked, and did things. His Parish was an offshoot of Christ Church, and was the immediate result of a schism in that congregation. An insignificant little building served as a place of worship. It did not suit the taste of Mr. Wilmer, and he went to work to replace it with a suitable structure. It was a large undertaking for the young Parish, but he put it through successfully, and at the end of six years witnessed the consecration of a church that seated nearly twelve hundred persons (May 17th, 1818). The proportions of the building were those of the holy city, the New Jerusalem; it lay foursquare;—the length, and the breadth, and the height of it were equal. Its apparent length was increased by heavy galleries which lined the walls on three sides, and

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were set apart for the Negroes. The acoustics were perfect. The church stands to-day a monument to the honest work that was done in those days.

His greatest work, however, was in diocesan matters. If the Virginia Church was to be built up to last beyond a generation it must be built on a foundation, after that of the Apostles and Prophets, of rational, intelligent service. Not only must she educate her clergy, but she must see that her laity of the coming generation should receive their secular education in a religious atmosphere. As soon, therefore, as he saw a Bishop at work in Virginia, he turned all his extra-parochial energy to the matter of Christian and theological education. As early as 1815 he was striving to re-establish at William and Mary College the Chair of Theology, which had been suppressed thirty-three years before, when deism was sweeping the country; for he held that a College that did not have a course in Theology was as defective as if it lacked a course in Mathematics. His life thereafter shows how he persisted in his undertaking. In 1818 he became first President of the "Society for the Education of Pious Young Men," founded that year in Washington, and he urged the clergy to take students for the ministry into their families and secure for them licenses as lay readers. In 1819 he established and conducted the "Theological Repertory," which was long the organ of the Education Society. In 1820 he secured the appointment of a Theological Professor at William and Mary College. In 1821 he recommended the establishment of a Theological School at Williams-

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burg, and advised "that a board of trustees be appointed to select one or more professors, and to raise funds for that purpose, and to correspond with the Standing Committee of Maryland and of North Carolina to ascertain if they are disposed to co-operate with us." In 1822 he reported that ten thousand dollars had been raised, and that the projected school had been opened with one instructor and one pupil.

This was the beginning of the Theological Seminary of Virginia, the great nursery of the Southern Church for well nigh three quarters of a century, and the mother of every missionary enterprise of the American Church. In 1823 the school was removed to Alexandria and opened in the school-house in St. Paul's churchyard. The Reverend Reuel Keith occupied the Chairs of Old and New Testament Biblical Criticism and Evidences, while Dr. Wilmer took the Chairs of Systematic Divinity, Church History and Ecclesiastical Polity. Fourteen students were enrolled.

While at Alexandria Dr. Wilmer's overflowing energy caused him to accept also the rectorship of St. John's Church, Lafayette Square, Washington, a newly organized Parish; and, with the aid of an Assistant at St. John's, he held this dual rectorship for one year. At the end of this period he resigned the charge of St. John's as each Parish then needed the entire time of its incumbent, and as he preferred to remain with that Parish which would keep him in closest touch with the Theological Seminary. It was the same devotion to theological education that

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caused him to decline the assistantship of Monumental Church, Richmond, a post which was, in all but name, a rectorship, since the rector, Bishop Moore, was engrossed, as a matter of course, in diocesan affairs.

It is a curious fact that many who have written of Dr. Wilmer have appeared to be unaware that he was first rector of St. John's Washington, the most noteworthy congregation at the Capital. The vestry of this Parish took occasion, in resolutions adopted August 1st, 1827, to express their sense of loss at his untimely death, and to say that "Dr. Wilmer was first rector of St. John's, had organized the congregation, and had faithfully and zealously discharged the important duties of the ministry while Pastor of the church."

In 1826, however, he saw his way clear to help forward the cause of Christian education more effectively than ever before, yet without ceasing to exercise the functions of the ministry. He was called to the Presidency of William and Mary College and the rectorship of Bruton Parish, Williamsburg. His ardent desire to make this old institution of learning a source of Christian inspiration induced him to accept both offers. He went to Williamsburg in 1826, but lived only one year.

This final period of his life was, though so brief, a period of singular energy and fruitfulness. Besides thoroughly performing all his duties as President, and holding the regular Church services as rector, he conducted informal prayer-meetings, and delivered lectures twice a week. In twelve months he com-

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pletely transfigured the social and religious atmosphere of the community. His ministry covered less than twenty years; but in that time he did a work that not only exists but exists palpably in the Virginia of to-day.

Dr. Wilmer was a prophet who received honor in his own country. He was always President of the Standing Committee and Deputy to the General Convention, and he enjoyed the rare honor of being President of the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies of the General Convention four consecutive times. His election to this high office was due as much to admiration for his ability as an apologist and debater as to recognition of his extraordinary capacity as an organizer and administrator. In 1815 he had published "The Episcopal Manual," one of the earliest handbooks of the Church, and the book went through several editions. It was Dr. Wilmer's aim, he tells us, to "point out the Church's excellences, to illustrate her evangelical character, and to infuse into the hearts of her children a portion of that healthful spirit which pervades all her services." He claimed for his work "only the merit of a compilation, and of an attempt to bring into a smaller focus the irradiations of piety and genius with which the subject is enriched." He vigorously combatted "two prominent errors" on the part of Church members, namely, "on one hand to prostrate or undervalue her order and institutions, and on the other to exhaust all their zeal in behalf of external concerns and to permit the spirit and essence of religion to evaporate in this way." His style in this book is plain and grave, al-



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most severe; but he quotes Hooker in justification: "The time will come when three words spoken with meekness and love shall obtain a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit."

Three years after the publication of the Manual he was called upon to defend the Church in a controversy with the faculty of a Roman Catholic college in Georgetown, who put forward a certain Father Baxter as their spokesman. The secular press was used for the controversy, there being no Church papers, and soon Dr. Wilmer's wholehearted defence had become so aggressive that the war was carried into the enemy's country and the assailant was more than willing to retreat from the field. It was this controversy that gave to Dr. Wilmer his national reputation.

In 1812, on January 23rd, Mr. Wilmer, already a young widower, married his second wife, Marion Hannah Cox, of Mount Holly, New Jersey. She was a daughter of Major Richard Cox, of the Revolutionary Army, and was, on the side of her mother, Mercy Taylor, of Monmouth, New Jersey, a connection of Sir Thomas Scott and Sir George Carteret. Of this union were born six children—three boys and three girls. The eldest, William Porteous, died of yellow fever in Natchez, Mississippi, just as he attained his majority. The second, Jane Eliza, was subsequently married to the Reverend Dr. Samuel Buel, of the General Theological Seminary, New York. Richard Hooker was the third. Marion Rebecca, the fourth, became the wife of the

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Reverend R. Templeman Brown, an unusually talented writer and preacher, who spent his last years at Rockville, where his preaching was pronounced by a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States to be equal to any he had ever heard. George Thorton, the fifth, entered the ministry a little later than his elder brother, was at different times rector of Bruton Parish, Williamsburg, and Christ Church, Mobile, and a member of the faculty of the University of the South, Sewanee, and died near Chatham, Virginia, on October 7th, 1898, lacking only a few months of attaining fourscore years. "His life," it was well said, "was a beautiful example of truth and high principle—a man of the strictest integrity and honor, unswerving in the discharge of what he conceived to be his duty." His son, the Reverend C. B. Wilmer, is rector of St. Luke's Church, Atlanta, Georgia. The sixth child, Maria Louisa, was married to Henry M. Bowyer, of Bote-tourt County, Virginia.

None of these children bore the full name of either parent, or of any relative or friend. Dr. Wilmer had a fixed opinion that a child should not be named after a living person. The ground of his objection was the possibility of backsliding on the part of the original. "The record of a life is not made up until one is dead," he said. "The name of a living person intended to be a mark of honor or of affection may become a stigma."

The mother died six months after the birth of the last child, when Richard Hooker was five years of age (September 15, 1821) and was buried in St.

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Paul's Cemetery, Alexandria. Shortly afterward Dr. Wilmer married his third wife, Anne Brice Fitzhugh, by whom he had two children. He died July 23rd, 1827, and was buried beneath the Chancel of Bruton Church, Williamsburg.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY DAYS AND FIRST PASTORATE

Richard Hooker Wilmer, second Bishop of Alabama, was born in Alexandria, Virginia, March 15th, 1816. Nellie Custis, granddaughter of Martha Washington, was his god-mother. Thousands of boys in Maryland and Virginia lived the life that he lived for the first few years. School occupied much of his time; horses and guns more; and he was soon an expert judge of horseflesh. Bone and brawn were developed to an unusual extent.

Merry and openhearted he was prone to mischief, as usually happens with boys of high animal spirits. One anecdote, which he used to tell himself at this period, is worth repeating here. While he was at school before his father's death the teacher punished him by a flogging, as he thought unjustly. He struggled and bit the teacher's thumb, and told him that he would give him a beating as soon as he was big enough. His father removed him from the school, and he did not see the teacher again until he was a young clergyman, arrived at man's estate and a picture of physical strength. Walking up to the teacher, who did not recognize him, he assumed an air of great ferociousness, and said, "The last time I

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saw you, Sir, I promised to give you a sound thrashing the next time we met." The frightened pedagogue besought him not to fulfill his promise, but to remember that he was a clergyman. Wilmer gave a great laugh and shook his hand, assuring him he had no mind to do him harm.

The robust mode of his life in boyhood stood him in good stead at an early day. His father enjoyed salaries which for that time were considered large, but he devoted a large part of his income to buying slaves in order that he might liberate them afterwards, and when he died he left little behind him to support his family. There was no life insurance, and times of excessive hardship were manifestly near. The family returned to Alexandria, where the struggle could be made under the most favorable circumstances. The step-mother was a woman of strong character and infinite resource, and between her and Richard there existed a perfect accord and mutual love that seldom attend such relationship. The elder brother being dead, the burden of support fell upon Richard Hooker. "When I was a lad of thirteen," he wrote to a friend many years after, "I fed my mother's family of eight children, my hand to the plow. I raised more corn this year on one-eighth of an acre than I have seen on some five acres in Alabama and Virginia." The food was often of the plainest, a dinner not infrequently consisting of buttermilk and baked sweet potatoes.

In 1831 Mrs. Wilmer removed to the Seminary Hill, and opened a High School on the site of what is now the residence of the Principal of the Episcopal

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High School. She employed two instructors, both clergymen, and limited the number of pupils to eighteen. The school continued for three years, but Richard remained but one year. At the end of the season he swung himself across a horse, and with a negro man, George, and the dogs, rode through the country to Ohio, where he located and sold the grant of land which had come down to the children from Major Richard Cox, to whom it had been a direct grant from the Continental Congress. It was the proceeds from this timely sale which enabled Richard to enter Yale College the next Fall.

Wilmer remained at Yale four years, graduating in 1836, at the age of twenty. The records of these four years are meagre. Dr. Joseph Packard says that when he came to the Theological Seminary in 1836 he came "with a reputation as a graduate of Yale," but he does not tell whether he was a specially distinguished graduate or whether the mere fact that he was a graduate of Yale was in those days a matter of note at the Seminary. It is known, however, that he stood high in his class, and that he made a reputation for himself as an athlete, where he established the record for broad jumping up to that time. A stone was set up to mark his record jump, and it remained for many years, until a new record was made that destroyed the glory of the old. It is interesting to know that among his contemporaries at Yale, at one time or another, were Cassius M. Clay, afterwards Minister to Russia, W. M. Evarts, Secretary of State, Edwards Pierrepont, Minister to England, Samuel J. Tilden, candidate of the Democratic

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Party for President of the United States, and Chief Justice Waite.

Returning from Yale to Virginia, he immediately entered the Theological Seminary and began his three years course of preparation for Holy Orders. No one ever heard him give any reason for determining to embrace a clergyman's career. It did not come to him as any sudden awakening. His life had not been one to require reformation or to produce revulsion of feeling. He had had greater responsibilities than commonly fall to youth and his character had been formed early in life. His father and his father's father and many generations before them in the new world and in England had furnished the Church with distinguished ministers, and Wilmer entered upon the sacred walk of life as the natural and regular thing for him to do. His class in the Seminary comprised six members,—James A. Buck, William H. Kinckle, William T. Leavell, Cleland K. Nelson, John J. Scott and Richard H. Wilmer. It was also the first year of their Professor of Hebrew, Joseph Packard. These seven men formed a compact little band, whose unity, ability and longevity has been one of the Seminary traditions. The students were not much younger than the instructor, and he was only twenty-four years of age; yet, following the lead of Wilmer, they gave their Hebrew kabbi, or Master, the affectionately familiar title, "Old Rab," which he never lost. Fifty years after their graduation, all but one—William H. Kinckle—were living and in active work. Five years later, when the survivors met at Rock Creek Church to break the

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Bread of Life together once more in the flesh, only one other had passed away—Cleland N. Nelson.

Wilmer did not live at the Seminary. His father's widow, whom he always regarded as if she were his mother, had settled at Lebanon, a few miles from the Seminary, and Wilmer lived with her, managing the farm and working upon it. Dr. Packard often recalled the picture of the farmer student riding to his lectures on theology with his trousers tucked into his boots. His studies were in fact interrupted by the exigencies of a farmer's life, but he was able, notwithstanding, to pass through the difficult three years' course and graduate without making an extraordinary effort.

Soon after graduating he associated with himself his bosom friend Kinckle, and as a voluntary course in pastoral theology the two started Sunday afternoon services at Lebanon. These services have been maintained ever since, and there is to-day a comfortable chapel, with Sunday school and evening services conducted by the Seminary students.

Wilmer was made Deacon by Bishop Moore on Easter Day, 1839. On the next Easter Day the same Bishop advanced him to the priesthood. Both ordinations were held in the Bishop's own parish church, the Monumental, Richmond. At his ordination to the diaconate a large congregation filled the spacious building, but very few persons came to the Communion. Though it was Easter Day the communicants were mostly old men and mature women. There were a few girls, but not one young man.

After his ordination as Deacon, he returned home



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for a few weeks, and while there preached his first sermon in the Seminary Chapel.

He was in the very flower of young manhood. His thick brown hair grew low over a high, massive forehead, and heavy brown eyebrows overhung his clear blue eyes. The eyes had a way of flashing with the upward glance and changing with his changing thoughts—beaming with benevolence, firing with indignation and sparkling with humor. He had a large straight nose and a broad, straight mouth, firm and, even when in repose, looking severe; but the lips were remarkably mobile and he smiled readily and laughed often—laughed at times “with his whole man,” the hearty laugh of an open-hearted man, who loves to live. He was born a humorist, and could extract from life a degree of amusement which is denied to less fortunate beings who do not understand jokes. His sharp intelligence often turned humor into wit, and he blended the two with happy effect. He was destined from the beginning of his career to acquire a reputation as a sayer of good things which passed from mouth to mouth to make people laugh. An outdoor life and much physical employment had laid the foundation of extraordinary physical strength, and the congregation at the seminary looked upon a splendid example of muscular Christianity. He was six feet tall with straight limbs and a chest so deep and broad that it gave the impression that he was shorter than he really was. From early manhood he practiced deep breathing every night and his chest had great expansive power.

He read the service in a voice which captivated his

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hearers with its mellowness, and richness, and without the slightest artificial effect the elocution was simple and perfect. When he preached they became aware that while the voice was well modulated it had a great range and was capable of trumpet tones which could carry a great distance. The young minister was a marked personality, and he gave the impression of fearlessness, determination and great strength. It was apparent from the first that such a man, having also a lofty character and rare intellectual endowments, would play no ordinary part in the destinies of the Church. The sermon which he preached on this occasion of his first preaching as a priest was strong and attractive, but being the discourse of a young man of exuberant fancy it was pitched high and contained specimens of nearly every rhetorical figure. The profuse ornamentation displeased his ancient instructor, Dr. Keith, and he criticised him sharply. The young preacher took his scolding good-naturedly, only saying, when Dr. Keith had concluded, "You know that when you turn a young colt out, he wants to run and kick up his heels. When he gets older he gets more steady."

Mr. Wilmer's first charge was St. Paul's, Goochland County, and St. John's, Fluvanna County. In his Fluvanna work he succeeded his cousin, Joseph Pere Bell Wilmer, and was in turn succeeded by his cousin, who returned to this field in 1844.

His parishioners lived for fifty miles along the James River. The families were hereditary Church families, but there was not one male communicant in the whole flock. Indeed, a male communicant was

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not then to be found along the river front from Lynchburg to Richmond, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles. Religion had made some advances in other portions of Virginia, but it had little foothold in this region. The men, with all the great but unspiritual virility of Esau, deemed it the unmanliest thing a man could do to profess and call himself a Christian. Church-going was for women and parsons. It is related that one youth, who had manifested some religious susceptibility, was lured to a drinking party, and after he had become imbued with the spirit of the occasion had, to hold his own with the company, related a jest whose point was profanity; whereupon a prominent and elderly man, whose commendation was highly esteemed in that community, leaned over and slapped him on the back and congratulated him "on his emancipation." It took the youth many years to overcome the blighting influence of that commendation.

At one of these drinking parties one man was seized with an idea, and most unexpectedly to himself and others, said: "Boys, it's a shame the way we neglect our wives. Here we are having a good time, and they never have anything to interest and amuse them. Let's build them a church." Strange to say, the proposition met with great favor, and then and there the money was subscribed for a commodious church building, which was erected shortly afterwards. A few months later, in May, 1839, the young minister reported to the Convention, in words that drew a distinction between parish interest and personal religion: "I take this opportunity to testify to

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the deep interest which the members of this congregation are taking in the prosperity of the church and, I would fain hope, in the subject of religion. A few gentlemen, under circumstances seemingly the most inauspicious, commenced and have completed the erection of a new church. The building will be dedicated to the worship of Almighty God at some time in the ensuing month." Before Mr. Wilmer surrendered the charge of this church thus unreligiously erected every man, save one, of that drinking party kneeled at the chancel rail and confirmed the vows of his long dishonored Baptism.

The way in which one of these men was caught is amusing: Mr. Wilmer was visiting around among his widely scattered parishioners, and in the course of his progress he was spending a few days at this gentleman's home. The good wife, anxious for the entertainment of her guest, insisted that her husband should carry the young minister out partridge shooting the day after his arrival. As so many men have done under similar circumstances, the husband demurred, saying that she could have the preacher in the house if she wanted to, but that he didn't want his sport spoiled "by having a parson tagging along behind him." The wife insisted, and, as men generally do under similar circumstances, the husband yielded, but grumbled. Desiring to make the best of a bad situation the host carefully explained the method of partridge shooting to his guest, and Mr. Wilmer received his instructions with becoming meekness. Then the two rode away to their sport. Just as they were dismounting, and while Wilmer still had one

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foot in the stirrup, a covey of partridges rose. Quick as a flash Wilmer, with but one foot on the ground, emptied both barrels of his gun in rapid succession, and two birds fell to the ground. The planter swore a mighty oath of surprise and delight, apologized for it hastily, and then and there pledged himself to constant attendance on public worship. "For," said he, "a parson that can do that well in something that is not in his line must certainly know his own business still better, and be able to say something worth hearing."

Unbelief was more intolerant and aggressive then than it is now, when it is so often on the defensive, and the young minister had had so far no experience in allowing for the personal equation, which must enter into calculation with every apologist who contends wisely. His theology was more theoretical than practical, but he had red blood, and the practical came rapidly.

It had to come rapidly. When he took charge of the Goochland field he heard frequent significant references to a planter, who may be called Mr. Smith, and who was in the habit of encountering young divines and getting the better of them in his rough-and-tumble way. He chose his own ground and his own time (generally grog time), and being quite familiar with Tom Paine—the Ingersoll of his day—he assaulted the young ministers with such unexpected foulness of speech as generally to rout them at the first charge. Mr. Wilmer was not beardless; for physical reasons he wore a heavy beard; but he was a stripling of only twenty-three, and not having proved

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his armor he had a natural and wholesome fear of meeting this much dreaded antagonist, and dodged him successfully for some months.

It chanced, however, that Mr. Smith's wife was taken ill suddenly and expressed a desire to see a minister. As Mr. Wilmer was the nearest he was quickly summoned and as quickly came. Pausing only a moment in the parlor, where he found Mr. Smith surrounded by a company of his boon companions, he was ushered into the room of the sick wife. When he had discharged his ministerial duties he re-entered the parlor.

He was met by the husband with the salutation, "Well, Mr. Wilmer, I am glad to meet you. I thought I would never have a chance of chatting with you. I am very fond of talking with the clergy."

His friends cut their eyes at each other, but innocent as to the hidden meaning of the remark Mr. Wilmer made a suitable response, and took his seat. He soon found himself in conversation with his host, who expressed a desire to "talk about the Bible." He tried by every possible method to stave off such conversation, for he was well aware that a thousand questions might be asked him which he could not well answer, and he greatly feared that the cause of truth, and incidentally his own reputation, might suffer from his inexperience. But Mr. Smith would not be shaken off, and the young parson gathered himself together.

"I should like to ask you some questions that I have often asked without getting any 'satisfaction,'" said Mr. Smith.

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"I think it very likely that you can ask questions without getting any satisfaction," returned Mr. Wilmer. "Even a fool can ask questions that a wise man cannot answer."

"Well, that's so," granted Mr. Smith. "But there is one question that I would like to ask you. I have asked it often, and if you can answer it you'll do what I have never heard done, and I will let you off."

"I don't know that I am specially anxious to be let off," boldly responded the parson, departing from the rigid truth; "but I will promise this: If your question is a proper one, such as I should and can answer, I will do my best."

"Well, that's fair enough. Now please tell me why Michael and the Devil had a dispute about the body of Moses?"

Mr. Wilmer had never given special attention to the matter. He naturally hesitated. The host put on very much of the sort of smile that the Devil might have worn—if the Devil smiles. The friends drew their chairs closer to share the triumph of their belt-wearing champion. The pause became an awkward one for the perplexed divine. Then a sudden thought came into his mind, ministered by some good angel, he felt assured, for he had the real solution of the question, though commentators had not suggested it; and he said:

"Well, Mr. Smith, I really think you should not have raised that particular question."

"Why so? Isn't it in the Bible?"

"Yes, it is; but you have no concern in it."

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"Why not?"

"Because, sir, there will never be any dispute raised over your body. Michael will yield without dispute."

There was dead silence, and well might there be. There was no jest in the speaker's tone, and his face was sternness itself.

The host turned deadly pale. His friends saw that he was hard hit, but they could say nothing. At last, by a great effort he resumed his constitutional gayety, for he was really a good-natured man. "Well," he exclaimed, "that's the best thing I ever heard in my life, I swear." He asked the parson no more questions, but began to come to church regularly and gave respectful attention to the services and the preaching.

His life, however, never changed for the better. Some years later when Mr. Wilmer had removed to another field Mr. Smith sent him word that he had found a good walnut log upon his plantation, and had had it sawed up and made into a coffin just to fit himself; and that if he could engage Mr. Wilmer to come and preach his funeral he "would finish the job." Mr. Wilmer had never changed his mind about the man; he had always regarded him as "a foul blot, a shame, and a corruption," and he answered: "I will preach your funeral with the greatest pleasure!"

The rule upon which he acted in his dealings with this man was a rule which he observed through life: "Some men," he said, "are to be treated with gentleness, courtesy, and the like. But when a man rushes at you like a Bull of Bashan, with horns and hoofs,



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he needs a blow between the eyes. You cannot stop to argue the matter any more than when you have upset a bee-hive."

On October 6, 1840, being now twenty-four years old, Wilmer married Margaret Brown at her father's estate, "Belmont," Nelson County, Virginia. She was younger than her husband by five years, a girl of exquisite beauty with fair complexion, blue eyes and golden hair. She had been well educated at home and came of old and honored Virginia stock on the side of her mother who was Lucy Shands Rives, the daughter of Robert Rives and Margaret Jordon Cabell. William Cabell Rives, Senator, Minister to France and the historian of James Madison, was thus Mrs. Wilmer's uncle. Her father, Alexander Brown, was born in Perth, Scotland, and came to this country in 1811 with his uncle, the Reverend James Henderson of Williamsburg. Margaret Brown accompanied Wilmer through his long life-journey and survived him. Her gentle and retiring nature was an offset to his masterfulness, and they were a well assorted pair. Much of the success of his career was due to her quiet helpfulness and gentle care. She had herself rich mental endowments, and participated in her husband's mental life. She read aloud to him a portion of each day, and the reading included not only the lighter literature of the day but the classics and erudite works on theology and philosophy. She helped him also in his parish duties and during the earlier years of their married life, although her health was then not robust, she often accompanied him in his long rides on ministerial affairs, sometimes riding

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beside him on another horse, and sometimes on the pillion behind him as the custom was in those days. One of her contemporaries has thus described her:

"Bishop Wilmer, richly dowered as he was by nature, and training—orator, wit, theologian—a very prince of the Church—was in nothing more fortunate than in his early marriage with Margaret Brown, the youngest daughter of Gen. Alexander Brown and Lucy Shands Rives.

"Gen. Brown, a Scottish gentleman who settled in Nelson County, Va., in the early years of the nineteenth century was a man of the highest character, of rare personal beauty and charm, while his wife, daughter of Robert Rives of Oak 'Ridge and Margaret Cabell, came of a family that gave much talent to the State and County and was by blood or marriage connected with the many families whose county seats looked out upon the Upper James or dotted the inland foot-hills of the beautiful Piedmont section. To call over the names of even a few of the families that made up this wealthy, cultured neighborhood—the Cabells, Rives, Pollards, Daniels, etc.—is to call the roll of the chief actors in Virginia history.

"Of such lineage, reared and refined influences, healthy environment and noble traditions, the future wife of Bishop Wilmer spent the first eighteen years of her life up to the time of her marriage. Those who remember her as a bride recall her blonde beauty and great personal charm. Those of us who only remember her in her later years love best to think of the low, musical voice, the sweet gentle nature, the warm, sympathetic heart, the sense of innate refine-

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ment which threw about her an atmosphere unique in its tender grace, which lingered with her to the end."

The spirit of self-help, which had from the beginning been a prominent characteristic in the young man, showed itself in the manner in which he now dealt with the question of support. Though the congregation lived in luxury the salary was small, and was eked out by gifts in produce. If the salary was not forthcoming he would curtail his family expenses, and use up the small surplus that he had managed to lay aside for just such occasions, but he would not, under any pressure, contract a debt. If the produce did not come on time he never opened his mouth. If his wood supply ran short and the need was not promptly supplied and remedied, he would hitch up his own team and go out into the woods after it, and he would act as his own teamster when his supplies came by canal from Richmond. His people did not relish seeing their minister doing the work that ordinarily only slaves and poor whites did, but they had to see it unless they showed a little interest in fulfilling their own obligations. What his congregation did for him they did of their own free-will and pleasure, and from first to last, in the sixty-one years of his ministry, he never once asked for his salary.

This ability to look out for himself, and so to look out for others, enabled him to teach a lesson and, occasionally, to drop some very broad hints. Residing in the neighborhood were several maiden ladies, sisters, in very reduced circumstances. They were

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industrious, and performed all their own domestic duties, but there was no man on the place to plow their little crop of corn. Close by lived a young Presbyterian minister, popular, promising, and unmarried. He needed exercise, and in order to supply this need the ladies of his congregation had provided for him a flower garden. The conditions, as they stood, seemed to the Episcopal minister incommensurable; the ladies, who would plow, couldn't, and the man, who could plow, didn't. So he determined to rectify things. He had never given himself over to flower-culture, but he had had intimate association with plow handles. He hitched up his horse, and went over and plowed the corn of the worthy maiden ladies, and then sent word to the Presbyterian minister to let those flowers alone long enough to hoe out the corn that he himself had plowed.

Another side of his ministry at this time is disclosed in the following incident, which is related in his own words:

"One day in 1840 I received a letter from a venerable old lady living at Ca Ira, the county seat of Cumberland County. It was a very plaintive letter, full of tears. She wrote of a dilapidated church building, no ministerial services, and a scattered and wandering flock; and implored me to come and give them some help.

"It was impossible to resist such an appeal. A similar appeal, she wrote me, had been made to a dearly loved classmate of mine, who lived in Charlotte County—a man of peculiar earnestness and devoutness—the Rev. William H. Kinckle. Our souls

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were in perfect unison, for we had been classmates three years together, and our souls were knit together as those of Jonathan and David. We conferred together, and arranged to meet on a Friday morning for a Mission.

"We met accordingly in a wretched and neglected building, one in which cattle had often found a resting place. At the first service we both felt that we were upon holy ground. None of the accessories of a reverential worship were at hand to aid us in our devotions. The church building was in a ruinous condition and the people unused to church services; they had been without a pastor for many years. Yet, notwithstanding the absence of everything visible to excite reverence there was an influence manifest to the inner sense which impressed us with unwonted solemnity amounting to awe, as if in the presence of Divine Majesty. We both felt this and earnestly communed together concerning it. Unconsciously we were standing on the border of the greatest of spiritualities—yea, of all realities—the manifestation of the Divine Spirit's work of power. As the services progressed from day to day this impression deepened. The hearts of the people were moved within them. We worshipped with reverence and Godly fear.

"The interest of the congregation deepened with every service. After service on Saturday afternoon,—we had no night service, because the village in which the church stood was small, and the congregation was mostly from the country—the only surviving male member of the little church came to us,

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and entreated us to hold service again that night, saying that there was a deep interest existing among the people, and that they would try to accommodate themselves in the village that night, if we would hold service. We were only too glad to hold the service, and the solemnity of eternity pervaded the worship that night—a night never to be forgotten by him who writes these lines.

“Next morning, Sunday, a vast congregation filled the church, crowded the aisles, the doors and the windows. My good brother Kinckle, ‘read the service’ as the phrase is. Ah! he prayed the service, and when he gave utterance to the suffrage in the Litany—‘O God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners’—he sobbed audibly, the people joining with him; and we sobbed through the Litany—the first time I had ever heard that Litany prayed as we, miserable sinners, have need to pray it.

“It fell to my lot to follow the prayers with a sermon. I spoke from the words—‘How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow him; if Baal, follow him.’ I write that I spoke, but I felt that I was a mere mouth-piece, through which a mightier power than mine was demonstrating the truth—the ‘demonstration of the Spirit and power,’ as I have since learned—a power never felt before or since which, sharper than any two-edged sword, pierced the hearts of the people. In one word, if I know aught of revealed truth, as exemplified in all ages, it was the Pentecostal power—that by which St. Paul subdued the hearts of the Corinthians—the

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preaching of Christ crucified, with demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

“Every word that I uttered seemed to fall upon the hearts of the people as palpably as the hammer falls upon the anvil. For the first time in my life—although I had been through a three years’ course at the Seminary,—I understood what St. Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians: ‘My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’ That ambassador of Christ who does not know of this power has mistaken his calling and is as one that beateth the air.

“My brother and I were obliged to remain for days, going from house to house, holding services in private dwellings for the benefit of the various neighbors, answering that question most cheering to every minister of Christ—‘What shall I do to be saved?’ I hardly ever met a person who did not seem to have been deeply impressed by the services.

“My last visit in the neighborhood was to the dear old lady whose letter had brought us together. The memory of that visit is as if it had been yesterday. She had not been at the services. Age and infirmity had kept her at home. As I drew near her cottage I saw she was bending over a large book spread upon her lap. Because of her deafness she was not aware of my approach. I stood some time gazing upon that beautiful picture. What is there in nature or art that can compare with it? She was near her own sunset, and the rays of the sun declin-

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ing westward glinted on her white locks and irradiated her whole person. I saw that her eyes rested upon the Prayer Book, the very cream from the milk of the Word. Tears of grateful joy trickled down upon her glasses and then upon the book before her. I see it all now as I write. At last I touched her shoulder to make known my presence. Unable from emotion to utter a word, she motioned me to a settee by her side. After a silence of some time she said: 'My son, I have something to tell you that you ought to know. Some time ago I had been dwelling long and anxiously upon the state of our little church. I called my daughter into counsel.' (Her widowed daughter was of kindred spirit with her mother.) 'I told her I had been much impressed by one of the Saviour's promises, which I had met with in my day's reading—"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for you of my Father which is in heaven." Now, daughter, let us two agree together and make it our daily prayer that our Father may send a blessing upon our church and raise it from the dust. We then agreed, and many and fervent were the prayers that went up to heaven directly from our hearts. We continued this for some time, when one day my daughter said to me 'Mother, this is all right, but we must do more than pray. God works through his ministry. His way is in the sanctuary. Let us call together some of our ministers, and thus render effectual our prayers.' This led to the letter I wrote you, and Mr. Kinckle read to the'—and here she fairly broke down at the remembrance of our



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services just closed. 'Oh, how true and faithful has been our Father in giving His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.'

"There was a large class for Confirmation soon after. They have all passed into Paradise. I knew of them for more than a half century, and I never heard of one who had back-slidden from His holy calling. The reason was that 'the Lord,' not I, but only through me, 'had added to the Church such as should be saved.' Ah, if it were always so now, there would not be such a lax membership of 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' "

A similar but even larger experience came in 1842. Mr. Wilmer was preparing to go to the Diocesan Convention, which met that year in Staunton, when he received a letter from the Rev. Dr. Norwood, rector of the Monumental Church, Richmond, entreating him to forego his attendance at Convention, and come to the writer's assistance. "There is a degree of religious interest in Richmond that is marvelous," wrote Dr. Norwood. "My people are begging me to open the church and hold daily service. Come and help me. Dr. Johns promises to come. All the churches in the city are open daily, and there is promise of a rich harvest."

Acceding to the earnest request, Mr. Wilmer went to Richmond and preached daily for several weeks. The interest was so intense that business was largely forgotten, and three services a day were called for and attended. To illustrate the extent and intensity of feeling: Mr. Wilmer went into a store on Main Street for some little purchase, and the

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proprietor, instead of asking what he wanted, said, "Can you give me a few minutes in my office?" The old Pentecostal question was in the man's heart—"Tell me what I must do to be saved?" More than once, while Mr. Wilmer was walking the street an entire stranger, recognizing him as "the preacher at Monumental," would lock arms with him and say, "Can you take a little walk with me?" And then, in varied forms, would follow the same old question, "What must I do to be saved?" "This was nothing of man's doing," said the preacher retrospectively, many years after. "The breathing of the Holy Spirit—that precious breath from Heaven—brought all things bright and beautiful to birth, as does the Spring-tide. Thousands were added to the Lord."

This episode was destined to change the entire course of the young preacher's life. Among the congregation that flocked daily to Monumental was another young man, a Scotchman, named John Stewart. A Presbyterian by inheritance he had become wearied beyond endurance with the acrimonious disputes then splitting American Presbyterianism in twain, and he was seeking a church home. He was profoundly impressed with Mr. Wilmer's manner of preaching and with the substance of his sermons, and he presented himself for Confirmation soon afterwards. Strong personal friendship sprang up between the men, and, as will be shown, the outcome was Mr. Wilmer's election as Bishop of Alabama.

It was during these years in Goochland that Wilmer came to know so well Nicholas Hamner Cobbs, afterwards first Bishop of Alabama. As a boy he had

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known him when he made his occasional visits to Dr. Wilmer at Alexandria and Williamsburg, but the lad of ten could not have made a lasting impression on the mature clergyman. When, however, the rising young clergyman was made known to Mr. Cobbs as the son of his old friend Wilmer he freely extended to him the love that he had felt for his father. It was the frequent practice of the Virginia clergy of that day to hold what were called "Associations"—forerunners of our present-day "Missions." They would go forth by twos, and preach a week or ten days at one place. Mr. Cobbs often invited young Wilmer to join him at an Association, and thus came to esteem him for himself even more than for his paternity. The two were almost antipodal in personal characteristics, but underneath the superficial differences they gripped each other in oneness of spiritual experience, of ecclesiastical trend, and of theological wholeness. A strong attachment grew up between them, and to the fondness of the elder for the younger did Mr. Wilmer attribute the fact that he was called to succeed his friend in every charge that Mr. Cobbs left—Bedford, Petersburg, Cincinnati, and Alabama; though he accepted the calls to only Bedford and Alabama.

Mr. Wilmer remained in this field three years after he was ordained priest, declining a number of calls to important parishes in the Diocese, and he added to the number of declinations in 1843 when his friend Cobbs went to Cincinnati and wanted him to go to Petersburg.

## CHAPTER III

### WILMINGTON AND BERRYVILLE

Although Mr. Wilmer declined to go to St. Paul's, Cincinnati, he accepted the call to the rectorship of St. James's Church, Wilmington, North Carolina, which came to him the same year. Only conjecture is possible as to the forces that could make him either leave his native state, or undertake a work so alien to his tastes. His rectorship of the parish of St. James lasted less than one year, and was not productive of any special results. The congregation needed such incessant visiting that little time was left for sermonic work, and it required so much table-serving as to prevent thoroughness of spiritual ministration.

He was not suited to such work, and the climate was not suited either to himself or to his family. The illness of one member of the family followed so close upon that of another throughout the year that parish work was rendered doubly difficult, and even the coming of his brother George to assist in the time of distress, generous though it was, rendered the situation only tolerable until a change could be made to a more salubrious climate and congenial field.

The opportunity came as soon as it was known he would accept it, and he took up the work in a portion

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of the Diocese in which he had not hitherto lived, —in Clarke County, in the extreme north of the State, where now Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland are so jumbled together by twisted state lines as to confuse the uninitiated visitor. His field embraced Grace Church, Berryville, and Wickliffe Parish. The rectory was in the immediate rear of the church, and the two, situated in the highest part of the town of Berryville commanded a fine view of the Blue Ridge on one side and the foot hills of the Alleghenies on the other. The church had been built by his father's old friend, William Meade. The ministrations of this Godly man, added to the fact that a large portion of the community were immediate descendants of Scotch Presbyterians, made the work less onerous spiritually than that which had occupied him in Goochland and Fluvanna. The intellectual pressure was lighter and the physical demands were fewer, because he had only two congregations to serve. Moreover, he had learned to use his tools. Having learned in the school of experience how to prepare sermons he expended less of fruitless energy in the preparation of any one sermon.

Here, from 1844 to 1849, he lived contentedly, worked industriously, but not feverishly, and grew in clearness of vision, strength of character, and facility and eloquence of expression. He did not abhor his old sermons, but he did not allow them to fossilize. They were always growing. And they grew by the absorption and assimilation of their fitting food. The hand of a craftsman never showed in his homiletic work. His sermons were logical in no other sense

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than that in which the life of a full-grown oak is logical, or the life of a well-rounded man is logical. They were, simply and inevitably, the outworking of a living thing according to its essential character. His method in preparing his sermons may be summed up in the one word Concreteness. Preaching doctrinal sermons, he never rested in abstraction. Condemning sin, he never addressed himself to ancient or distant sinners. Heralding salvation, he never promised a safe harbor to them that should continue in unrighteous living. It was his practice, whenever he began the development of a new sermon, to sit down first and write it out in the form of a strong personal appeal to some member of his parish or community, who, in his judgment, needed some such friendly but urgent exhortation. Having thus obtained the desired directness and friendliness of tone he eliminated from the final draft every identifying circumstance; and when he entered the pulpit the labor of man and the grace of God had forged a weapon that pierced many a heart with the conviction of its sinfulness. In reason no man could turn out such sermons as these must have been with the rapidity and lack of effort with which machinery can place the finished product on the market; and as a matter of fact Mr. Wilmer simply declined to make the attempt. Except on rare occasions the limit of his sermon productiveness was one sermon a week. His method of preaching was singularly effective. While he commonly carried the written sermon with him into the pulpit he often did not open it at all and never read more than a part of it. He thus produced an effect

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which is seldom possible from a preacher who reads closely from the written page. The preaching was practised on Saturday when it was his custom to rehearse the whole sermon. With appropriate gesticulation and skillful use of his marvelous gifts of voice, he appealed to his congregation directly, pinned their attention and made an impression upon them which they did not forget. Perhaps the most noteworthy result of his methods as a preacher was found in the large throngs of men whom he drew to listen to him. They came because he was eloquent and sincere. They were attracted by the manliness of the preacher as well as the Godly manliness which he preached.

Much of his time at Berryville was used but not wasted in country-visits, which consumed not minutes but hours; in hunting trips which consumed not hours but days; and in tree-planting which demanded continued watchfulness and discrimination. The rectory yard at Berryville is filled with fine old trees that he planted fifty years ago.

The inevitable monotony of life in a small village was broken by intercourse with his brother clergymen, by exchange of pulpits, and by meetings of the Valley Convocation. This was the first Convocation to be organized in Virginia. To Wilmer, one of its organizers, it was an important body. The first meeting was held in Shepherdstown, and it was a congenial company that thus met together. Besides Wilmer there were his kinsman R. Templeman Brown, and his friends James Chisholm, John F. Huff, C. W. Andrews, Alexander Jones, and Corne-

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lius Walker. The last named was his nearest neighbor, residing at Winchester, only ten miles from Berryville. Next to William H. Kinckle he was Wilmer's most intimate friend. They were drawn together in part by like views on theology, but chiefly by affinity of spirit. They often exchanged pulpits and visits, friendly sympathy and congratulations. Recalling this period, Dr. Walker writes: "Our social relations were of a peculiarly pleasant character. It was always a pleasure to have him as a guest, and his genial conversation and intercourse made him especially welcome. I had been married only a few months, and one of his topics of pleasantry with my wife was that of the beginning of house-keeping, and its proprieties, especially with the wives of preachers, and their need of carefulness—as to criticism from lay sisters especially. Sometimes this would be in connection with the fare, sometimes with the ornaments of the table, the china or the silver tea set—the presents, perhaps, of others, but condemned by visitors, in view of its extravagance; and, with these the playful exhortation to feminine clerical propriety."

It was probably in some of these little chats that the story was told of some clergyman's wife, who had been on a clerical visitation with her husband for one or two weeks, and who had felt, of course, that she must be a pattern of propriety. The visitation ended in a brief stay at the house of a brother clergyman. "I am in Free Mason's Lodge, now," was her first exclamation, after greetings were over, "and I can say what I please." And needless to say, she



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pleased to say a good many things that she had not said for some weeks.

Not in clerical homes only was he welcomed. He had a strong hold upon the plain people. Called upon to perform the marriage service at a blacksmith's home near Berryville, he was compelled to remain several hours. So well did he use this time that when he was about to leave, the blacksmith said to him: "I am certainly sorry to see you go. You make a man feel so much at home in his own house."

During his residence in Berryville Mr. Wilmer's reputation as a preacher became more widespread. His growing reputation did not, however, vitiate the purity of his teaching, and he did not, for the sake of popularity, soften his stern rebukes of sin. Often, indeed, the very manliness of the man, his freedom from Pharisaic stringency as to non-essentials, and his unqualified insistence on the weightier matters of the law, gave his words an importance that they would not have had if spoken by a less masculine man. Often he gave offense, but he never shrank from speaking the truth that he might avoid that trial. The rule which he adopted here, and which he followed to the end, and which he sought to impress upon the last deacon that he ordained, he himself formulated thus: "Dare not say aught in your pulpit that you would not say if Christ were there in visible presence."

On one occasion Bishop Meade, when visiting the parish, inquired playfully, "Brother Wilmer, how many people have you preached into the Church this year?"

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"I haven't preached anybody into the Church," was the answer; "but I have preached one man out of it."

"Well, Brother Wilmer," responded the Bishop gravely, "that may very likely be the best year's preaching you have ever done."

It was the universal custom in those days that communicants, instead of approaching and leaving the Communion rail singly, came and went by "tables." When the first rail full retired the next came forward. Between every two rails there was, it is evident, a period of silence for which there was no rubrical provision, and during which there was so much moving and rustling as to impair the spirit of devotion. It was the custom of many to take this occasion for the reciting of sacred verse. Mr. Wilmer adopted the practice on the ground that it was for the edification of the congregation. His recitation of the old hymns was unusually striking, for his rendition of "Just As I Am," and of "Rock of Ages" is recalled to this day by the older members of Wickliffe Parish.

Early in the year 1849 came an ominous and most discouraging breakdown in the young minister, who was only thirty-three years old, and who should have been growing stronger and stronger. Obstinate catarrh, which returned at intervals through his whole subsequent life, played some part in rendering him unable to work. The limestone water of the Valley did its part, also, serving him as it afterwards served his successor, Francis M. Whittle,—ruining his digestion and leaving him for many years a

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nervous dyspeptic. But the chief trouble was nervous exhaustion, following hard mental application and high spiritual exaltation. This last trouble had threatened for some time, even if it was not an inheritance from the high pressure which had characterized his father's life; and to its oncoming and a blind groping for something to ward it off may be ascribed Wilmer's well-nigh excessive fondness for tobacco, whether plug or fine-cut, pipe or cigar. "You must stop using tobacco in any form," said the Philadelphia physician upon whom he called to diagnose his case; "it is undermining your constitution and seriously affecting your heart." "If I thought it was hurting me I would stop it," returned Wilmer, "but I don't believe it has anything to do with the case." And he went his way.

Nevertheless he did make more than one attempt to let it alone, but always without success. The story of one of these attempts is particularly interesting:

He was riding along the country road late one afternoon with a friend at whose home he was to spend the night. The friend had been inveighing against the folly of smoking and the uncleanness of chewing, and a wave of contrition seemed to sweep over Wilmer. For once he could not make adequate defense of his habit. Suddenly rising in his stirrups he reached down, pulled out his plug of tobacco, and threw it as far as he could into the weeds, which spread away some distance from the road.

"There," he exclaimed, "that's the last time tobacco shall ever pass my lips in any form. I never realized before what a foolish and filthy habit it is."

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His friend congratulated him on his resolution, telling him "that it was nothing more than he had expected from a man of such strong character when he had got his eyes open," and the like; and as they were at the "big gate," he sidled his horse forward to perform the office of hospitality. As the gate swung open he turned and saw Wilmer looking anxiously in the direction of the tobacco. Nothing, however, was said. The evening passed pleasantly, but, for Wilmer, with apparent discomfort and nervousness.

Next morning when the host called his guest he called in vain. On entering the room he found some of Wilmer's clothes on a chair, but Wilmer himself was absent. Going anxiously out on the front porch and looking down toward the big gate he saw his total abstainer on his hands and knees beating the weeds carefully for his rashly discarded plug. Presently he found it, rose, brushed his knees, took a generous portion for immediate consumption, and came back to the house to finish his toilet. No further discomfort and nervousness were manifested by him, and he took the badinage of his friend most cheerfully.

Many years later, when he was more than seventy years of age, he revisited his ancient friend and the conversation turned most naturally to old days and long-forgotten incidents.

"I see, Bishop," observed his friend slyly, "that you haven't quit the use of tobacco yet."

"No," responded the Bishop with a chuckle, "but I have quit lying about it."

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Broken down as he was Mr. Wilmer insisted on working up to the last day of his residence at Berryville. One instance of this earnestness is still recalled:

Shortly before his departure he determined to make one last effort to bring to a realization of his condition an old unconfirmed parishioner, Col. W——, whose wife was a Godly woman. He had often approached the old gentleman on the subject of confessing Christ before men, but had as often suffered rebuff. This time he went determined to press the matter to a conclusion. The conversation proceeded at first along commonplace lines, and as long as it did not become more serious it was pleasant enough. But when Mr. Wilmer finally came to the purpose of his visit, and began to urge him to come to Confirmation, the Colonel said not another word, until a momentary pause in the minister's appeal gave him the opening that he wanted. Then, abruptly waving aside all that had been said, he remarked in the most casual tone:

"By the way, Mr. Wilmer, come out in the lot with me. I want to show you some sheep of which I am very proud."

Mr. Wilmer perceived at once that the case was hopeless and he arose to go. But determining to ease his own soul at any rate, he took the man's hand and, looking him square in the face exclaimed:

"I pray God, Colonel, that at the last day you may be found among the sheep, and not among the goats."

Almost the whole of the ensuing year was given

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to the re-instating of his health—an uneventful employment. Most of the time he spent at and about Alexandria, the scene of his happy boyhood and the home of many devoted friends. Two characteristic letters written near the close of this period of trial illuminate the spirit of the man. Written only ten days apart and to the same person—John Stewart—and dealing with entirely different matters, they show that while conditions oppressed him they could not brow-beat him:

Alexandria, January 4, 1850.

“My very dear friend,

“I cannot say how many promises to myself concerning you have evaporated in the last twelve months. I felt that you were one who had a right to expect some reports of my whereabouts and my whatabouts; but the fact is that for some months my head was so much affected as to entirely prevent me from writing, and since that I have been so much of a wanderer as to be unable to do anything with system. In a word, I have been oppressed with the intolerable burden of having nothing to do—the most engrossing and slavish life that it has ever fallen to my lot to experience.

“But I will not enter into any detailed enumeration of the past, for the care of us all seems to do with the future. You may judge with what anxiety I watched the progress of indisposition which little by little required me to diminish my labors, and at last demanded the most absolute abandonment of all mental solicitude. And then came the painful separation from a congregation, I must say the most

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devoted and anxious that I have ever known,—and then the taking up the staff—to travel you know not exactly where. All this you may imagine. That in the shattered condition of my nervous system I have survived it, is to me most amazing.

“But for the future: I have now been lying fallow for a year almost. Does not Providence in His system of improvement deal with us as farmers with their lands?—turn them out to rest, to gather to themselves the elements of future productiveness? It may be that we, in laboring for others, forget to supply ourselves, and part, so to speak, with some of our substance—as lands are exhausted by heavy cropping—and then, as they, are thrown out to rest. At all events this has been my hope and in some sort my stay. I trust that the wish is not exclusively the parent of the thought—I find myself however still upon the past.—

“I have concluded to take charge of a small parish this side of the Ridge in the villages of Upperville and Middleburg.

“I am afraid that I am rather premature, but the fact is that I had no choice.. I cannot live without preaching—unless I should secularize myself—which is a painful alternative, and should ever be a *dernier ressort*. I trust however that the duties of this small parish will not materially conflict with my convalescent state of health. If I can get a small place in the country I shall do so with the hope of keeping up the improvement in my health and also of contributing something to my own support.—I write this because I am sure that you will be glad to hear what

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are my plans and hopes. Most assuredly I should be glad to hear the same of you and yours—I want to know something of your hopes and fears and efforts. There are great plans to be consummated, and I fear much that most Christians are sleeping when they ought to be working.

“Have you read Elliott’s *Horae Apocalypticae*? If not, lose no time in getting it. It is worth all that I have seen upon the mysterious Book of Revelation. It will afford you and Mrs. Stewart a winter’s delight, and I envy any man the privilege of having it to read for the first time. Should you see Richard Cunningham do mention it to him. I don’t know that it has been republished in this country.

“Here is the end of my sheet, and I have a month’s talk about Church, State and Prophecy; and I shall have to break right off, with room to say no more than our love to you and Mrs. Stewart. Do write to us all about you, and very soon.

“Yours affectionately,

“R. H. WILMER.

“N. B. Address me at Alexandria where I shall be for ten days at least, and after that at Upperville, Fauquier Co., Va.”

John Stewart answered this letter at once, and Wilmer’s immediate response indicates greater cheerfulness of spirit:

Alexandria, January 14, 1850.

“My dear friend,

“Your letter just received finds me laboring under an attack of catarrh, which has confined me to my room for a week and given me over



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to a long and apparently endless train of Diaphoretics, etc. The doctor says that their effect is to produce a determination to the surface. I can testify that they have no more profound tendency. So perhaps can you by the time you have finished this sheet.

"First, as to the money: I have had my sympathies much directed of late to an ancient member of our church, who, having deserved well of her generation, is descending to the shades in much poverty and dependence. She was for many years the matron of our seminary and the tender alma mater of us all. The infirmities of old age deny her the resource of any exertion, and the sensibility and refinement of her character preclude her from entering the asylums for the poor. I have been concocting a plan for doing something to give her comfort and the feeling of independence for the little while she has to spend with us. Your generosity enables me to do much in the way of its accomplishment, provided you approve. She is all that your terms require, save that she is not a widow. But why should this circumstance bar her claim to kindly consideration? For though she never lost a husband, yet, sadder still, she never had one; and, though an old maid, has more of the milk of human kindness than many widows.

"I plead to a great weakness in the matter of old maids; and though they have been denied the greatest of earthly comforts (and that not usually for any lack of effort on their part), I am clear for their not wanting the less. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Stewart?

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"Yet who ever thinks of old maids with any tenderness of concern? Where are your asylums for the forlorn ones of the earth—laughed at by the women, and not asked by the men? A woman may marry, remarry, and repeat; and after having drunk to the full, there is an asylum for widows open to receive her. I tell you, my dear fellow, we aren't up to our duty in regard to old maids, and, *nolens volens*, I am going to make you do something for old maids this time.

"I have been thinking a good deal about the great struggle between Protestantism and Popery that is soon to come off. Which side of this quarrel think you this unfortunate class will espouse (and as it is to be a war in some sense with the tongue you will perceive the inquiry to be important), unless we mend our manner towards them? The Romanists make much of them, extol the single state far above that of the married, and provide retreats for their chosen ones far out of reach of the rude and staring world; while the Protestants, for no better reason, it would seem, than to differ from their adversaries (just as Presbyterians stand because Romanists kneel), treat them with remarkable neglect.—I do trust that your Protestant feelings will not be shocked, nor my orthodoxy suspected, when you learn that your late bounty has gone as an offering to the virgin, Mary. (Miss Mary D——).

"I have a vast deal upon my mind to write you anent. Perhaps at a more auspicious time I may trouble you with some of the reflections I have made upon passing events. I trust that you will encourage

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me by doing the same and at length. I am only sorry once while reading your letters, and that is (an Irishman would say) when I have finished. I would give a great deal to spend that week with you, but I do not now see any way of accomplishing a trip to Virginia.

"I think you will be more and more pleased as you hear Dr. Jones. The principal defect of his preaching, it seems to me, is the repeating too much in the way of exhortation what had previously been sufficiently urged—and that with greater force. But his sermons are full of important truth and frequently of eloquent truth.

"I cannot close without thanking you for the volume which you have put it in my power to possess. I have made arrangements to obtain it from the North. Nor can I allude without emotion to the kind and delicate manner in which you sought to advantage me in another way. I have but little and have to husband well my resources, and, thank God, have so far been preserved from the weight and temptations of debt. The least among our anxieties, thanks to most gracious promises, is that which relates to our daily sustenance. I do trust that I have sought this with less anxiety than I have the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and may reap the promise.—

"Let me hear again from you. My indisposition will keep me here yet for some days.—You ought to have special thanksgivings that you have girls—for wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? And when I see the abortive efforts of parents in relation

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to their sons, and the heedlessness of boyhood and manhood, I see no comfort from the answer to the question, 'By taking heed thereto according to thy word.'

"Mrs. Wilmer joins in kind regards to yourself and Mrs. Stewart, and kisses to the little ones.

"Yours affectionately,

"R. H. WILMER."

## CHAPTER IV

### UPPERVILLE AND FOREST

The three years (1850—1853) that Wilmer spent in Upperville, in charge of work in Loudoun and Fauquier Counties, were almost as uneventful as the Wilmington rectorship. The parishioners were a mere handful. The work to be done was practically what he chose to do, and local conditions would have set a narrow limit to the most aggressive spirit. There were no parish houses, no vested choirs, no night schools, no mothers' meetings, to be kept going; no vast apartment houses in which to make fifty ten-minute calls in a single day; no roar from paved streets, no clanging of trolley-car bells, no insistent jangling of desk-telephone. Instead of all this, there was early rising and intimate dealing with domestic and kitchen-garden matters, some hours of work out in the field, a ten-mile ride to pray with a sick parishioner or to join in a hunt, an hour or two of reading or study—and then to bed and refreshing slumber. The years that passed so peacefully brought healing on their wings and re-instated the health of the young man so thoroughly that though he never was, to his dying day, the perfectly robust man that nearly every one took him to be, he never again laid aside his work because of physical infirmity.

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Upperville was only twenty miles distant from his old home at Berryville, but it was separated from Berryville by the Blue Ridge and by the traditions that make Englishmen different from Scotchmen. Manners were easier and obligations of a religious nature were carried more lightly. For one thing church-going was a matter of preference more than of duty or of privilege, and one could abandon it entirely without losing caste in the community.

Fortunately for Wilmer the similar conditions with which he had had to contend in Goochland and Fluvanna at the outset of his ministry were still fresh in his mind, and he determined to use certain tactics that had been successful before. The young men were the hardest to get to church, and upon investigation as to the way in which they spent Sunday mornings in such a small village, when they did not go to church, he found that they were accustomed to play marbles. Marble-playing was not then the childish sport that it is now, but among the rural population held the place with sporting characters that is now held in larger places by pool or billiards. Mr. Wilmer considered for a while what would be the most effective way to deal with the problem that confronted him. In his younger days he himself had been a famous marble player, and it is a tradition that on one occasion, in order to show certain doubters that he had no superstitious reverence for dignities, he even challenged good old Bishop Meade to a game. Of his expertness, however, Upperville was ignorant.

So, one Saturday morning he came up the street

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to a place where a game was in progress, and after standing awhile an interested but inexperienced spectator, and asking a few questions that showed his abject ignorance, he had the temerity to challenge the whole crowd to a game "for keeps," as they always played. The challenge was quickly accepted and Mr. Wilmer spent that one Saturday morning of his life preparing for Sunday in a most unusual way. The young men had expected an easy victory, but somehow the marbles in Wilmer's pile kept increasing, while their own had to be replaced by fresh purchases. Finally every marble in Upperville was in his possession. It was too late for the dealers to get a new supply before the next day. The usual sport was perforce omitted on Sunday, and the players being really good-natured young fellows accepted the preacher's cordial invitation to attend church in the absence of any better recreation. Again his proficiency in that which interested men aroused admiration; some became regular attendants at church, and he was able to lead their interest from the person preaching to the Person preached.

During these years came two children to bless the home life of the young minister. Marion, afterwards Mrs. Harvey E. Jones, of Mobile, was born on February 10, 1851, and Alexander Brown was born on August 9, 1853. The coming of children added responsibilities that had hitherto been lacking, but also swept away from his mind and his preaching the last faint trace of machine-made theology. The obligations of husband, which humanize men, were supplanted, in their influence on abstract reasoning, by

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the obligations of father, which excel all other natural obligations in the clearness with which they declare the mind of the Heavenly Father to His children. From this period an element of sympathy and tenderness was always present in Mr. Wilmer's sermons. He was leaving the shallows and launching out into the deep.

In 1853 Mr. Wilmer removed to Forest, in Bedford County, just west of Lynchburg, and took up the work which his friend Cobbs had begun and carried on so successfully. Fourteen years had passed since Cobbs went to Petersburg, and some vicissitudes had befallen the work. While by no means discouraging, it had not developed as its first impulse had promised. In fact, this country work had, like many persons, attained maturity rapidly, yet without attaining any extraordinary maturity.

The condition of parochial stagnation which he found did not disturb Mr. Wilmer, for emphatically it was not a day of institutional work when it would seem that the first and great commandment is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; and it was a day when the clergy were more engrossed in building up souls than in building up parishes. Little that is now embraced in the phrase "Christian Socialism" was then heard from the pulpit. Personal innocence and personal righteousness were insisted upon; over and over again it was proclaimed that the religious must be self-supporting and that no truly religious person could for selfish advantage harm others; but the problem of how to elevate the masses was not in the preacher's text-book. To secure the approach



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of the individual soul to God was the great object of the preacher, and this approach was to be made not by works of righteousness but by a realizing sense of God's mercy. Such teaching had its good side, but it had also its bad side. It brought heaven and eternity and God very near, but in foregrasping spiritual joys it tended to forget earthly obligations. It set the head in the clouds, and trusted to the enthusiasm of the Vision to do the duty of more sober but not less divine principle. It was here that Mr. Wilmer first said, with impatient jest at the narrow evangelicalism of the prevailing Virginia Churchmanship, as alien to his own as to Cobbs's:

"Our people are so afraid of being justified by good works instead of by faith that they won't do any good works."

How Mr. Wilmer dealt with spurious forms of so-called religion is best shown by an incident that occurred in Bedford County, and that he was fond of recounting:

A very dyspeptic old lady, known as "Ma Bettie," lived in the parish. With some of the clergy and numbers of the laity who often confounded dyspepsia with piety, and flatulency with spiritual depression, she passed for quite a saint. This reputation was founded for the most part, so far as Mr. Wilmer could glean from diligent inquiry as to what particularly saintly works she had done, upon the old lady's eagerness for prayers during her oft-recurring periods of depression.

Mr. Wilmer had not yet met with the old lady, but he had formed an exalted idea of her spirituality

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from description and from general repute. One afternoon he received a hurried message to come to her.

The servant said she was "in a bad way." He hastened to her bedside, and was soon in the midst of the prayers and hymns and usual consolations. After a time the old lady seemed to be relieved, and he left.

After frequent repetitions of this experience the young minister began to suspect that there was some hitherto overlooked cause for her depression, and that it did not lie entirely in the domain of the soul. He began to study the phenomena of the case. He was soon struck by the fact that the attacks came on late in the afternoon, and that they synchronized suspiciously with the dinner-parties of a friend nearby, who alway sent her a waiter from the feast. On these facts he based a theory which he was soon enabled to verify.

One day the friend gave another dinner-party. Late in the afternoon the parson was hastily summoned to Ma Bettie. He found the invalid very uncomfortable, and manifesting great difficulty of breathing. On the table by her side were ranged the Bible, the Prayer Book, Law's "Serious Call to a Devout Life," and Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Holy Dying." The old lady looked toward her spiritual adviser speechlessly, imploringly. She thought that her hour had come.

Instead of reaching forth his hands to the books, Mr. Wilmer asked the patient, abruptly and unfeelingly, "What did you eat for dinner to-day?"—a most

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unspiritual question, and entirely irrelevant to the weighty errand on which he was presumed to have come. So it seemed to the old lady, and she began, as is the wont of people of a certain sort, to talk about the great piety of Mr. Wilmer's predecessor, who had prayed over the old lady for many years without once suspecting the cause of her depression.

Happily, however, the predecessor was not present, and Mr. Wilmer insisted on his question: "Now, tell me, Ma Bettie, did you not eat your usual dinner of bacon-and-greens to-day, and an hour or so afterwards did not our friend Mrs. ——— send you some pie, and custard, and suet pudding?" The minister himself had a remaining sense of the same suet pudding.

The old lady, with a deep sigh, confessed to the whole.

"Now, my dear Ma Bettie, don't you think that your unusual depression may be due in some part to indigestion?" asked Mr. Wilmer. He then suggested a little ginger toddy as an admirable consolation in such conditions.

"Ah," groaned Ma Bettie, her mind persistently bringing up the poor parson's predecessor, "my dear, good Mr. S———; he understood my case, his prayers always helped me in these spells."

"Now, my dear madam," urged Mr. Wilmer, "let me be plain with you. I trust that I am not insensible to the efficacy of prayer. In its own line of action it is incomparable. I know nothing else so efficacious. But I venture to suggest that you are mistaken as to your present condition. You need medical treatment."

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"But, oh! Mr. Wilmer, I have such a sinking spell."

"Yes, I see; but don't you know that any vessel overloaded is sure to have a sinking spell?"

The old lady was utterly insensible to the suggestion offered, and kept on her maundering talk of former blessedness under other ministrations, when the pastor prayed all the time, read hymns, etc., etc.

Finally Mr. Wilmer's patience was exhausted, and he broke in: "Well, my dear madam, that's all just as you say, no doubt. But let me say just this: There are some kinds of depression that come forth by the consolations of religion—prayer, and hymn-reading, and the like; but 'this kind'—this kind that is now troubling you—'can come forth' and in future be warded off, 'by nothing but by prayer and fasting.' "

Then he declined to hear another word from her at that time, but mixed her a little toddy, dashing it with essence of ginger; and she was speedily relieved. After a good nap, during which the minister sat quietly waiting, she awoke to receive certain Godly admonitions which Mr. Wilmer administered with due respect to the conditions.

When Ma Bettie sank to her rest that night she was not quite so much of a saint in her own estimation, but she was a much more sensible woman. And by more attention and self-control in her diet she became a much healthier and happier Christian.

Wilmer's life during his Bedford ministry was determined largely by the condition of his health. The years passed in Fauquier and Loudoun had done much to build him up, but Bedford did more.

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Living on a farm, and laboring the greater part of every day with his own hands, his system gradually became normal, and the forces of nature seemed refreshed as the fields by rainbearing clouds. He prepared only one sermon every week. He never preached a poor sermon, but he often preached an old one, brought over, with modifications, from a former pastorate. He made meagre reports to the Diocesan Convention, and gave few figures, but from the reports given it is evident that his ministrations were less effective in lengthening the cords of the Church than in strengthening her stakes.

He had now held parishes in Fluvanna and Goochland, at Upperville and Berryville, and in Nelson County, and was well known also in Alexandria. His reputation during the season of his illness and progress to restored health had steadily grown and he was probably the best known young country clergyman in the State.

The years had rolled by, one very much like another, but with the successive summers and winters Wilmer attained greater mental and spiritual power and became more and more firmly rooted in the faith and in a consistent philosophic realization of it. Conscious as he was of his extraordinary capacity he had, without effort that was apparent, restrained himself for many years to the circumscribed, monotonous life of a rural missionary, laying up a goodly supply for the life of greater activity which he knew must come, but which he would not seize before it thrust itself upon him as a task assigned by God himself.

## CHAPTER V

### EMMANUEL, HENRICO COUNTY

The summons to this unknown, harder work came to Wilmer at the age of forty-two, and it came from a most unexpected quarter. His old-time friend, John Stewart, had been growing during these many years in wealth and in sense of responsibility for a proper disposal of what God had given him. Brook Hill, his country seat, about four miles north of Richmond, was surrounded by many extremely poor persons, poor with the poverty peculiar to the "poor whites" of the South in olden days. These people were living in practical atheism. They had no house of worship, and though so near a highly cultured city were entirely overlooked in the weekly ministrations of the Gospel.

The role of Dives was one which Mr. Stewart could not be accused of assuming. Selfish ease was something he had heard of, but had never experienced in himself. That sense of responsibility of which mention was made a few lines back gave him no rest until he had exhausted every means of obeying its imperious demands. The great fear of his life was that he might become covetous, and to overcome this supposed tendency he exercised himself in liberality. While he was earning his wealth

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he was imbued with the thought that to render a good account of his stewardship it would be necessary for him to spare nothing in attempting to help his poorer brethren, the children of a common Father. The best way to start about this work so as to make it count, it seemed to him, was to reveal to these ignorant persons the fact that they were God's children, and that God was seeking them that he might give them part of their rightful heritage. Not gifted with the power of public speech, he sought a preacher, and his mind turned instinctively to his friend Wilmer, whose power had been felt in his own life. He proposed that Wilmer should come into the field and gather his own material and build up his own congregation; while he himself would take care of the temporal considerations.

Seeking to make plain his whole spirit in the matter he wrote to Wilmer: "The main thought is this—that here am I in the midst of a poor heathenized, or rapidly becoming so, population, white and black; with material all around far more promising to human eye than in three-fourths of the recently formed country-churches in Virginia; that the natural process being for the Gospel to leaven parts adjacent, radiating from the towns as centres until finally it over-spreads the length and breadth of the land, why should it not do so, or begin to do so, in the neighborhood of Richmond? I see no reason why it should not be that, with the proper man—that is, with love to Christ, and, with Christ, for human souls, with energy, and what is called tact and good sense, good feeling, and a good way of showing all

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things, so as to draw and touch that strangely complicated machine, the human heart—we may not ask and look for the blessing of God; and with this, success is certain. Not such as will make much stir or noise in this world—though, it may in heaven, where fame is worth having. I am not blinded by personal attachment when I say that I think you are that man.”

This invitation came to Mr. Wilmer almost simultaneously with calls to several large established parishes, and he took them all into consideration, but passed by all the attractive invitations and, under the leading of God, chose the work that was least of all—that, indeed, was existent only to the eye of faith. He did not come to this decision without a struggle. It was under advisement for more than four months; but when he did accept he pledged himself to give the project at least three years’ trial. Mr. Stewart’s proposition was laid before him in July, and was not accepted until December.

After accepting Mr. Wilmer lost no time in entering upon his novel work. He had no precedents to guide him. He was attempting something that nearly everybody knew would fail. It was the loudly proclaimed theory of popular Protestantism, a theory weakly echoed by unthinking or faithless Churchmen, that the Protestant Episcopal Church was not suited to the unlearned and the uncultured. The progress of the Church among the Negroes of Georgia, on the plains of the West, and in the crowded tenements of New York’s East Side had not yet proclaimed the adaptability of the Church to



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varying conditions, and her inevitable fitness, when going in the spirit of Christ, to reach all that Christ Himself can reach. Nor had it yet entered many minds that a legitimate function of the Church is to bring intellectual enlightenment into the lives of the ignorant that they may have a more abundant life, and so be enabled to apprehend to some extent what is that rational service which it is the duty of every Christian to substitute for unthinking compliance with received rites, ceremonies and customs.

In entering upon this new work Mr. Wilmer did not deem it necessary to introduce any startling methods. He assumed that the fundamental needs at Brook Hill were the same as at Berryville and Upperville, and on this assumption he applied the same methods that he had found successful there, and that he knew were not merely experimental. He visited diligently from house to house, and preached to his rude auditors the same sort of sermons that he had been preaching to men and women of another class. While he preached John Stewart prayed, and the preacher attributed the effect that followed his sermons to Mr. Stewart's prayers. Services were held at first in the neighborhood school-house, which was the common property of all religious denominations. But soon a church was built, nominally by the congregation at large, the poorest giving his mite, but really by John Stewart and his brother Daniel, who gave all but one hundred dollars of the \$13,000 expended in building operations. The church was named Emmanuel—God-with-us. Then a parsonage was built. The hearts of the peo-

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ple were gained, the confirmation classes were large, and as the months went by a crowded church and a full Communion rail attested the success of the work.

In the building of the church and of the rectory there were differences of opinion. These differences arose, not between the rector and the benefactor, but between the rector and the various members of the vestry which had been elected to dissipate all suspicion of proprietorship and dictatorship, and which succeeded right well in that purpose. At the beginning the Stewarts gave seven and five-sixths acres of land for church, rectory, and burying ground. The burying ground was to be governed always by a self-perpetuating body of trustees. The design of the church was selected by the rector, but the vestry overrode him in the location of the building. He took the bit in his teeth, however, in the location of the rectory, a commodious two-story edifice, which he placed on the other side of the main road and far back in the woods. His object in thus locating the rectory was to protect his domestic life from incursions of babies on Sunday mornings. Another result, which was not anticipated, was that its retired location preserved it from two raids of Federal troops, a few years later, the soldiers passing within a hundred yards of the house without suspecting that any one was living in the vicinity.

In the late summer of 1859 the work was well under way. The foundations of the church were already laid, and Mr. Wilmer wrote to John Stewart, then absent at the springs: "Mr. Williamson

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groaned much over the foundation and site of the church. It looked to me askew—but I take it for granted that it was admirably done. I am inclined to think that if the church is completed in about two years more it may be better for us, but as we have asked God to direct all things I suppose the best time for it to be finished will be—when it is finished.” He wrote at the same time about his July and August parish visiting: “I reached home a few days after you left, and have been going the grand round ever since. More prayer and more faith will do much: I have assuredly, in the last week, done talking enough.” Some personal and parochial details are revealed in a letter written a few weeks later: “I was laid up for a few days with sore-throat and fever. Am in usual health except some chronic sore-throat with hoarseness; preached all day yesterday and am as hoarse as a raven to-day. \* \* \* Had some sweet singing yesterday at the Brook. The young people meet every Friday afternoon for practice, and show good results. I take great comfort in thinking that you and your brother remember us every Sunday afternoon in your prayers. We have been blessed, I verily believe.” And again he wrote: “I preached for Minnegerode yesterday morning in pay for some of his valuable help. The congregation, owing to the absence of the rectors of the Monumental and St. James’s, was large. We had a fine congregation at the Brook in the afternoon—many seatless, and fringing the outside of the windows.”

Several incidents will illustrate the sanctified con:-

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mon-sense with which Wilmer met the varying conditions of his work, and used now the staff and now the rod of the faithful shepherd:

Like all clergymen he was anxious to bring many to their Baptism and their Confirmation, but unlike some he was so clear as to what Baptism and Confirmation should mean to an adult that he would not practically force these rites on an unwilling or half-convinced man. "I staid all night at Dr. ——'s," he wrote to his friend. "He is much concerned, I think; but how can a man serve two masters? Mr. B—— is [convinced] a little push would bring him in, but I won't give it. This is necessary to make the surrender perfect."

But when he thought admonition necessary he used it, according to his judgment of the exigencies of the occasion. "Why don't you come to your Confirmation?" he asked a friend one day.

"Well," replied his friend, "the fact is that I cannot exactly swallow the Creed, and I have been trying to swallow it many years."

"You must change your swallow then," retorted Mr. Wilmer.

Some months passed before the two met again. "I have thought of what you said," began the friend, "and I am going to be confirmed at the earliest opportunity. For twenty years I have been tinkering at the Creed, and your suggestion put me on an entirely new tack. I found that the Creed could not be changed, and I have gone to work to enlarge my swallow."

At another time the door of a house at which

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Mr. Wilmer called was opened by one of the little Sunday School children, and as he shook hands with her he asked abruptly. "Do you know your Catechism?"

"Yes, sir," was the timid response of the little girl.

"What is your name? Who gave you this name? What did your Sponsors then for you? Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and to do, as they have promised for thee?" The questions came rapidly, and were answered by the child without hesitation. The Creed, the Commandments, the Duty to God and to our Neighbor, the Lord's Prayer—all were passed safely; and then came the question: "What desirest thou of God in this prayer?"—a question that may properly be called the *pons asinorum* of the Church Catechism. The child started, stopped, started again, balked, made a third start; and almost in tears confessed that she could not answer.

"That will do then," replied her catechist; "you don't know your Catechism. Go tell your mother I've come to see her," and he walked on into the house. The little girl rushed to her room, had a good cry, washed her face, brushed her hair, and sat down to perfect herself in her Catechism. She succeeded in her task. Years afterwards she mildly remonstrated with her former pastor for a hardness of manner on this occasion that had cut her to the quick.

"Daughter," he replied, "did you learn your Catechism after that?"

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"I certainly did, Bishop."

"Well, that was what I was after," he returned.

"But, Bishop," she urged, "would Christ have taken such a method of making a little girl perfect herself in what she had evidently been working on honestly before?"

The Bishop's face grew suddenly grave. He looked at her steadily a moment, and then said: "Perhaps not, my daughter, perhaps not."

These illustrations of methods so diverse make manifest that "gumption" on the possession of which Mr. Wilmer always prided himself—the wisdom to work always according to one's own characteristics and endowments, the ability to vary the treatment according to the diagnosis of the patient's condition, the courage to lose for the present in order to secure the ultimate gain. It was because he adhered strictly to this rule of fitness to the ultimate aim, that he was looked upon as "high" in Berryville, and as "low" at Brook Hill; these popular designations having reference solely to his method of conducting the service. An ornate service (the term "ornate" is purely relative) best subserved the uses of public worship at the former place, while at the latter the severest simplicity was essential to sincere worship. It was always a regret to Wilmer that there was not in every theological seminary a "Chair of Gumption" for the propagation of common-sense among the nascent clergymen.

The first summer's rectorship was marked by a great deal of sickness in the neighborhood, chiefly of a diphtheritic nature, and Mr. Wilmer, who had

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sent his family away, cared in every possible way for his congregation, not absenting himself where he could benefit, and not thrusting himself where he would add to cares with no other effect than to declare his own zeal. His instinct as a gentleman is shown in this passing allusion in one of his letters: "The disease in its serious form is one which yields to no treatment that doctors know of. I have not seen them (certain sick persons) for a few days, because I would not be of any service, and did not wish by going to withdraw their attendance upon the sick."

His characteristic sense of humor could see absurdity in forms of speech, if not in matter of thought, even in circumstances of distressing illness. He relates the following conversation with a physician just returning from a visit to a patient:

"Where from, Doctor?"

"From Mr. B's. His daughter is very ill."

"What's the matter?"

"Diphtheritic croup."

"What are you doing for it?"

"Giving calomel in furious doses."

"Good constitution, Doctor?"

"Yes. She stands medicine wonderfully."

"That's about the fact," was Mr. Wilmer's comment, which the physician did not hear. "Gibraltar stands cannonading wonderfully, but I never knew that the cannon-balls did Gibraltar any good. Mr. B. told me that they were now giving his daughter three grains of calomel every two hours, and that the child did not fancy anything to eat, although

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the doctor wished her to eat. Very likely. I know of many diseases that flesh is heir to, but of few worse than an attack of mercury every two hours. Bless the babies! Speaking of babies, I suppose you have heard that M—— is another father."

Happily the treatment in this particular case was without tragic result, Wilmer himself being witness, though, on account of prejudice, an unwilling witness. "B's daughter," he writes three weeks later, "is much better—so reported. I hear of champagne and partridges being sent her, and there is a savor of life in the sound, of which mercury smacks not."

Mr. Wilmer's life at Brook Hill was by no means that of a country parson. Living only four miles from Richmond, and hard-by a much used, well-kept thoroughfare, and having a good horse and being of a social temperament, he thought nothing of an almost daily ride into town, sometimes to preach on Sundays, as we have seen, sometimes on matters of business connected with the building of the church, and not infrequently to exchange experiences with his clerical brethren of the larger parishes. For nearly an entire year he was the minister in charge of Christ Church, giving that congregation a sermon every Sunday in addition to his work at "the Brook." He thus became as well known in Richmond as he was at "the Brook," and had a large circle of admirers and friends in the city.

Among his especially valued friends, whom he met so often in the city and less frequently at his home, were Dr. George Woodbridge, of Monumental Church, and Dr. Joshua Peterkin, of St. James's.



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Dr. Woodbridge had been a West Pointer before taking Holy Orders, and had contracted habits of such precision that it is related of him that when he had been in the ministry several years and a friend said to him as he was robing before service: "Doctor, don't you need a couple of pins?" he answered, "Thank you, but I have two that I used at West Point." Dr. Peterkin, "Brother Joshua," as he was affectionately termed, was noteworthy for his loving nature and his spiritual-mindedness, and was so tender-hearted that when he was a student at Princeton he was commonly reported to have sat up all night to nurse a sick chicken. An anecdote of these two and Mr. Wilmer is told that illustrates finely their respective habits of expression. They were carrying on a desultory conversation one morning when a fourth clergyman rushed into the room, and cried: "A revival has broken out in Galway!"

"You speak as if it were small-pox," said Mr. Wilmer.

"I thought you pronounced it 'Gol-way,'" suggested Dr. Woodbridge.

"God be praised!" ejaculated Dr. Peterkin.

It was Mr. Wilmer's boast that ever living within his income he never had to borrow money. He had been at Brook Hill less than a year when at one fell swoop he borrowed one thousand dollars from John Stewart. The debt was no discredit to him. The details can be reconstructed and the underlying motive brought clearly into view from Wilmer's unconscious revelation in two letters to John Stewart. Under date of September 5th, 1859, he wrote:

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"Next week I have to go to General Brown's sale. Everything is to be sold. I want to rescue some of the family servants out of the hands of the traders, and therefore must go if possible." On September 20th he wrote: "The object of my trip was accomplished, and, between Mr. Meade and myself, we arranged to prevent the traders from getting any of the servants. They were all provided for, and to their satisfaction, which relieved us from much solicitude. You were kind enough to offer me some assistance in the premises. In the course of thirty days I shall be in a position to discharge every liability which I have assumed, and shall only need \$1,000 for the present emergency. This I promised to raise this week if possible. It will be in time if I can get it by Saturday next. I feel the more free in asking your help to this amount because I am sure that you will candidly tell me if it will be at all inconvenient. I will not fail you in thirty days. I have always had a great objection to increasing this particular kind of property, but we can't always have our 'rathers,' and there are many ways in which we have to bear each other's burdens. White Virginians do this at great length." It is needless to add that the amount was both received as requested and repaid as promised.

Hard labors and abundant honors came into Wilmer's life almost simultaneously, and united to make the year 1859 the most momentous of his life so far. He had been at Emmanuel only a few months, when the Council that took cognizance of the birth of his congregation elected him a principal deputy to the

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coming General Convention which was to meet in Richmond in the fall. A few weeks later William and Mary College conferred on him the degree of Doctor in Divinity. The impression that he left upon the students is thus described by one of them, who was afterwards elected as his Assistant Bishop—Dr. John S. Lindsay. “I remember distinctly the first time I ever heard him preach. It was in 1859, in the chapel of William and Mary College. He was then a comparatively young man—virile and robust in his teachings, sympathetic, hopeful, and cheerful in the tone of his whole life. He gave me at this time an impression of practical Christianity that was far more pleasing than the hard, dry presentation of it that was then so common in our churches and homes. It was not difficult to understand the exceptional influence that he was said to exert over men. He was intensely human and splendidly manly.”

The coming of the General Convention was a great event to Richmond and to Dr. Wilmer. The entertainment of the Convention tested the city's capacity. There were not so many hotels then as now, and though houses were opened wide to the deputies much contriving was necessary that nothing might be lacking. Wilmer was on the Committee on Hospitality, and as one of the younger clergy much labor devolved upon him. He did not take his labors very much to heart, though he did all in his power. Contemporary letters disclose a cheerful optimism on his part, not shared, perhaps, by its objects, as to the nightly comfort of those delegates

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who, beds having been filled, must sleep on cots and lounges every night of the Convention.

When the Convention came Wilmer was regular in his attendance. Neither forward nor guilty of undue diffidence, but with the unconscious dignity of a man sure of his position, he took a prominent part in many debates, his gift of repartee standing him in good stead and making him a debater to be admired and an antagonist to be feared.

Though new in the General Convention he did not hesitate to express publicly, but in a characteristic way, his opinion of a bishop who would not live in his diocese. It is always the custom of the Convention to determine the place for the next triennial Convention by concurrent resolution, each House adopting the place with the proviso, "the House of ——— concurring." When the Committee on the next place of meeting reported in favor of Chicago for the Convention of 1862, a resolution was introduced accordingly, "the House of Bishops concurring." At this particular time the Church was much exercised over the absenteeism of Bishop Whitehouse of Illinois, who had continued to reside in New York after his consecration, who could not be prevailed on to move to his see city Chicago, but who could not be reached by authority because no provision had ever been made for such an unthought-of condition. When the resolution to meet in Chicago was introduced, Dr. Wilmer arose and moved to amend by substituting for the customary formula the words, "the Bishop of Illinois concurring;" "for," he said, and the Convention up-

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roariously agreed with him, "we ought not to go into a man's diocese unless we are certain of finding him at home."

Open sessions of the House of Bishops were beginning to be desired, even then, and Dr. Wilmer and his friend Dr. William Adams, of Wisconsin, were pitted against each other in the debate that followed a proposal to have the sessions of the Bishops made as open as those of the Clerical and Lay Deputies. Dr. Adams said that, as a fact of history, the Bishops' custom of sitting with closed doors originated "when the House of Bishops was composed of three very venerable and respectable old gentlemen, who sat opposite one another and talked in conversation which they did not care to have reported to the world; and having commenced the practice they found it convenient to keep it up." Dr. Wilmer said very little about the origin of the custom, but contented himself with defending its expediency, not simply on grounds of individual reputation, but chiefly because it conserved the solidarity of the Episcopate. But in order to save the time of the Convention he voluntarily cut short his speech at risk to his reputation as a debater—and was utterly disgusted to find himself succeeded by a less considerate speaker, who consumed one hour and forty-five minutes in a speech remarkable only for its length.

This Convention was noteworthy for many things—for the fact that it was the last before the Civil War, for the all-pervading good spirit of its members, for the extraordinary intellectual average

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of its laity, of whom, for example, fourteen were acting Chief Justices of their respective states; and, more than all else, for the consecration of four Bishops in one and the same day and for the order promulgated in that connection by the Presiding Bishop. The Bishops-elect of Texas, New Jersey, Ohio and Minnesota—Gregg, Odenheimer, Bedell, and Whipple—were all to be consecrated, but there was no church in Richmond large enough to contain the crowds that would throng to such an occasion. With the one thought in his mind that some place must be found spacious enough to accommodate the public, the Presiding Bishop, without consulting his brother bishops, issued an order appointing Capitol Square as the place of the consecration. When this order was made known to the deputies there were several hours of strenuous speech-making. Resolutions were introduced from various quarters, some calling on the House of Bishops to nullify the Presiding Bishop's order, others reserving nullification to the House of Deputies itself, and a few mildly remonstrant; but all were a unit in opposing the selection of a place of such nature for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries while so many worthy church buildings stood ready for reverent worship. The House of Clerical and Lay Deputies came nearer open rebellion on this occasion than at any other time in its existence. Finally word was brought, unofficially, that sufficient representation had been made to the Presiding Bishop to induce him to change the order, and to appoint the consecrations for different churches at the same

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hour. In this manner the services were held, and the crowds divided and accommodated—Odenheimer and Bedell being consecrated in St. Paul's Church; Gregg in the Monumental, and Whipple in St. James's.

Although the political waves were already running high they had not made themselves felt in the Councils of the Church. The Convention was marked by mutual courtesy and general good-will, and so far there had been entire absence of sectional sense. But one day toward the end of the Convention came news of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, and the attempt to stir up a slave insurrection less than two hundred miles from Richmond. The effect of this news upon the Convention was like that of a douche of cold water. The genial warmth of friendly intercourse between men from different sections of the country gave way to the most perfunctory conversation. Bosom friends dared not discuss the all-absorbing event with each other, unless it were a Northern man with a Northern, or a Southern man with a Southern, and, indulging in common-places, soon found the speech of others flat, stale, and unprofitable. This mutual withdrawing was fought against by all and their mutual irritation was suppressed to the utmost extent. Only one incident of the official proceedings is attributable to the sudden cessation of good feeling: A motion to call upon the Governor of the State in a body was defeated by a large majority of the clerical and lay deputies, though in fact many of them did attend the reception unofficially. But the sessions of the Conven-

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tion became more and more hurried, and were shortened and adjourned, the Northern guests in Southern households and their Southern hosts each breathing, as they separated, a sigh of relief that the tension was ended, that, at least, courtesy and hospitality had not been outraged, and that they had parted as friends.

The Convention having adjourned Dr. Wilmer returned with new zeal to the completion of Emmanuel Church. The late spring of 1860 saw everything in readiness, and on Friday, July 8th, the church was consecrated by Bishop Johns. The Holy Communion was not administered until the following Sunday, when a visiting clergyman preached. The rector preached his first sermon in the new church on July 15th, his text being St. Matthew 1:23—"Emmanuel, God with us." And on the same day was begun a Sunday school with six teachers and forty-one pupils.

Of course North and South did not immediately line up in armed opposition. John Brown was a symptom, and his raid was one of a long series of events which required time for their culmination. Eighteen months, indeed, passed before the attempted strengthening and consequent bombardment of Fort Sumter destroyed the last hope of a peaceful solution of existing political differences. In this time the true patriots on both sides were striving to counteract the baleful influence of fire brands on both sides. With vain hope that the influence of the cooler-headed would prevail constructive minds went forward with projects whose completion was



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based on the averting of an appeal to arms. Diocesan and inter-diocesan institutions were undertaken. Endowment subscriptions were made in immense sums. Church foundations were laid. New parishes were organized, and still greater expenses incurred.

During some of the time Dr. Wilmer himself was thus engaged. Brook Hill did not seem to exhaust his energy. While continuing to preach to the poor of that community he was also actively interested in establishing a newly-projected church for the Negroes of Richmond, and it was no small satisfaction to him to see the undertaking brought to a successful conclusion, which was also the commencement of the real work, in the organization of St. Philip's Church.

But while he was engaged in this work he was not blind to the trend of events, and he was not unmoved by what he saw.

His mother's father had been a major in the army of the Revolution, and he was by right of descent a member of the society of the Cincinnati, but while he took a wholesome pride in his ancestry he was indifferent to the prestige which membership in the Cincinnati gives and he passed it over to a younger brother who was a student of genealogy and whose interest was greater than his. He arranged, however, that upon his brother's death the membership should pass to his own son. He was proud of the nation which the Revolution had made. The Wilmers were men of the Church; but as was common with all Southerners of their class, they took an interest in public affairs. By his marriage he came

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into a greater interest in politics. The Riveses were generally Whigs; the Cabells generally Democrats; and Wilmer had embraced the Democratic side which was better suited to his uncompromising temperament and direct way of looking at things. He had spent four years at New Haven when he went to Yale, and he knew many Northern men, but he had never lived anywhere but in Virginia, and for a short time in North Carolina; all of his family for generations back had lived in Virginia and Maryland. His wife's father was a Scotchman, it is true, but all of her connections on her mother's side were identified with the history and upbuilding of Virginia, and all of them were slave holders. Wilmer believed slavery to be a good institution, beneficial to the whites because it made them accustomed from childhood to responsibility and to the exercise of powers of command; beneficial to the blacks whom it had lifted up from the savage state. Nevertheless, beyond a few slaves who came to him as part of his wife's dower he owned none, except the few whom he bought in order that they might not fall into the hands of traders. His father, as we have seen, spent part of his substance in buying Negroes in order to set them free; back of his father were other Wilmers who were emancipationists. But he lived in a community of slaveholders and he always upheld the institution. He was, in fact, as firmly rooted in Virginia as one of her own great trees; he drew his sustenance from her, and every trouble of her's was his also.

A clergyman, he was first a man. A man, he lived

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in sympathetic touch with his fellow-men. He was enthusiastic and aggressive in what he deemed the right. Deeply and even passionately involved on the side of his State and his section, and perceiving the high probability of war, he was for a time swept off his feet by his conception of duty, and became captain and drillmaster of the home-guard raised in his neighborhood. But a little reflection, the inward working of that time-element for which he was to argue so eloquently at the close of the war, cooled the heat of his fever and turned his activity into more legitimate channels. He came to remember, so he tells us, that the Son of Man, whose servant he was, "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them," and that "the servant must be as his Lord." He resigned his captaincy and contented himself with ministering to the sick and wounded. But throughout the conflict, which he always regarded as a war of defence and not of aggression on the part of the South, he publicly and strenuously urged men to the tented field, taking as his warranty for going thus far the command of the Lord as recorded in the tenth chapter of the book of Numbers, that the priests should blow the silver trumpets summoning the tribes of the Lord to arms in case the land was invaded.

His mind as to current matters is well disclosed in a letter written to a friend on March 25th, 1861. The Virginia Assembly had striven hard to secure a peaceful solution of the momentous matters at stake, and had failed. Thereupon a Convention had been called to discuss the State's duty in the

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premises, and this Convention had now been in session several weeks. There was the widest divergence of views among the members, and the most ample opportunity was given every one to set forth his own opinion. Wilmer was in daily attendance as a listener to the debates. He was strongly opposed to the majority who were striving against secession and who strove successfully until, hostilities having actually begun and the President being about to call for volunteers, it was necessary either to secede or to fight against their own section:

"Dear Charles—I am there. Of course. And as to secessionism—I am there, of course. And as to Jeff Davis, I am there, too—saving one speech of his in which he speaks of marching into the North. There he speaks as a fool. At that point he blunders. The game cock will fight anywhere. The dung hill rooster will fight just as well as long as he is on his own ground. A raid into the North, or into Washington, would rouse the old mettle of the North. I know them well. They will not come here; but woe to that Southern army that goes there.

"The question of secession, and of a Southern Confederacy, and of Virginia's duty, is to me, and has been from the first, as clear as the noonday. And ultimately Virginia will be there; but now she knows it not. The majority report lays down principles which lead to but one conclusion—I have several unpublished volumes on this question, and I must stop."

But he could not stop. After a few paragraphs

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on domestic details he began again: "You ought to run on and hear some of the guns at the Convention. Summers and Baldwin made good legal arguments, but there was no bottom to them. They never touched the farthest verge of statesmanship. \* \* \* I linger here in Virginia, but should Virginia make her election to seek shelter under the wings of the Black Republican Party (which I do not believe) I must be a secessionist, not only *per se* but *per sese*.

"The Convention will settle down upon ultimates, which the North will not concede; and then she will slide. Should war take place affairs will be precipitated. Secession at present would bring a revolution in our midst. 'Give that horse time. All that horse wants is time.' "

And when he sought to confine other paragraphs of the same letter to the topics of personal and family health and parish prosperity, he ever reverted to the one all-absorbing theme: "We have been remarkably well this winter. Your servant is in good health, barring just now a suffocating cold. My wife looks as young as when I wooed her. The children are hearty. Mammy Rose is rejoicing in the baby, and the lines are in pleasant places. The church is flourishing; men seeking for truth, and some finding it; and the members walking as children of light. I preach all day without caving in, and never know anything, ordinarily, of ancient infirmities. God is gracious and good to me, my friend; and his blessing enables me to stand the heaviest affliction of the hour—the rule of Lincoln.

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And yet I feel enlargement to pray for him. Should he get to coercing Southern brothers and shedding Southern blood my prayers must be for my own kindred."

And now came the call to Dr. Wilmer to go up higher. Nicholas Hamner Cobbs, Bishop of Alabama, had died in January 1861, on the day of Alabama's secession from the Union, and the diocese had in May of the same year attempted to elect his successor. It is pretty certain that Dr. Wilmer was already well-known to the clergy and better informed laymen of the diocese, not only through acquaintance made at the General Convention and through general reputation, especially for the work done at Brook Hill, but also through the personal commendation of his old-time friend, Bishop Cobbs. And it is not improbable that he came to the Bishop's mind as quite as likely to be a fit successor to him in the episcopal office as he had proved himself to be in various rectorships. But the Bishop had other well-known friends, too, whom he had deemed worthy of the episcopal office and to whom he thought the bishopric of Alabama especially fitting. Chief among these was Henry C. Lay, whom he had expressed the wish to have as his successor. Dr. Lay was then Missionary Bishop of the Southwest, but he had been rector of the Church of the Nativity, Huntsville, Alabama, and the foremost clergyman of the diocese. Clerical jealousy on the part of some of his brethren and the premature assumption of magisterial authority on his own had combined to eclipse rare powers of administration

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and leadership, and the clergy had refused to nominate him to the laity, though the laity would have ratified the choice by acclamation. The Convention had deadlocked on the name of Dr. William Pinckney of Maryland, whom the laity rejected partly because he had been presented instead of the man they wanted, and partly because of his supposed political views. Then the Convention had adjourned until November, with the intention of practically agreeing on some one before they came together again. Much correspondence followed, and it soon developed that Dr. Wilmer was the choice of a large majority of both clergy and laity. Accordingly, when the Convention reassembled, he was unanimously elected Bishop of Alabama, on the first ballot. The election occurred on November 21st, 1861.

The committee to notify Dr. Wilmer of his election consisted of the Reverend Messrs. F. R. Hanson, J. A. Massey, and J. H. Ticknor, and Messrs. J. D. Phelan, H. L. Alison, and H. A. Tayloe. Dr. Wilmer immediately accepted the election, and on November 27th wrote to Bishop Meade: "I have neither expected nor sought it. I accept it with many misgivings and many fears. If I knew more of what I have to encounter, I would, I doubt not, fear more than I do."

It was easy for Wilmer to accept the election, but it was not easy for him to be made bishop. Political and ecclesiastical changes were occurring that caused serious delay and embarrassment in the matter of his consecration. One by one, the Southern States,

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acting in their sovereign capacity, had withdrawn from the Union, and one by one the churches in these respective nations had resumed their original status as independent, autonomous churches. All acknowledged themselves still as "Protestant Episcopal," but all denied that they were "in the United States of America." As each State stood and must stand alone until a new union should be formed, so each Church stood and must stand alone until a new compact should be made. As soon as the States were organized into "The Confederate States of America," steps were taken to organize "The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America." But these steps took time, requiring a call for a Primary Convention, its meeting on July 3rd, a new Convention on October 16th, and a reference of the Constitution then adopted to the several dioceses for their ratification. The General Council of this Church was to meet in Augusta, Georgia, in November, 1862. Thus when Alabama elected her Bishop the constitutional law of the Church was still in solution, and, therefore, there was no provision for the due and proper consecration of a bishop.

At least, so thought Bishop Atkinson, of North Carolina, whom Dr. Wilmer had asked to be one of his consecrators, and who said, writing to Bishop Meade, from Wilmington, North Carolina, on January 6th, 1862: "Wilmer has expressed to me the wish that I should act as one of his consecrators, a duty which I would gladly perform, both because of our long-standing friendship and because of my high



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estimate of his qualifications for the office about to be conferred on him. But as the Canons of the Church in the United States are not to be followed, and as the Church in the Confederate States has adopted no Canons, I see no law or rule by which he is to be consecrated, and I must decline to take part in what seems to me an irregular transaction. If there were a necessity for its being done at present that necessity might stand in the place of law. But I see no such necessity, as Canons can and will be passed at our next meeting, and the Diocese might in the meantime be served by the neighboring Bishops. I must therefore reluctantly request not to be named one of his consecrators." In this sentiment Bishop Otey, of Tennessee, concurred.

The other Southern Bishops were little concerned about canonical preciseness. It seemed to them that the consent of a majority of the Bishops and Standing Committees in the Confederate States was all that was necessary, and this had already been obtained. There was no other ecclesiastical ground upon which objection to further procedure would be entertained by the straitest precisian of them, and they determined to act as if the former Canons were used with local adaptation.

But the gathering of three Bishops at any one point was rendered difficult by the unsettled condition of the country. Alabama had asked that her new Bishop should be consecrated in Mobile, and a fruitless attempt was made to accede to her request. The Presiding Bishop, Meade of Virginia, was fast verging to the grave, and could not go far from

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home. Green, of Mississippi, was in a condition physically that precluded travel. Elliott, of Georgia, could not be expected to leave Savannah while it was menaced by the enemy; and the same reason prevented Johns, Assistant Bishop of Virginia, from going a great distance from Norfolk. Lay, of Arkansas, could not be reached promptly at Little Rock. The blindness of Davis, of South Carolina, obviously incapacitated him. Polk, of Louisiana, had donned the General's uniform. And since Atkinson and Otey would have nothing to do with it, the consecration in Mobile, or in any other place distant from Virginia, was out of the question. Richmond was the only place where the service could be arranged for with any reasonable hope of carrying it out.

Some months were consumed in finding out these troubles and in making other necessary arrangements. The period of waiting was a period of embarrassment and grief to the bishop-elect. The grief was at the death of his infant son, John Stewart, who, born in 1860, died a few weeks before the consecration and was buried hard by Emmanuel Church. The embarrassment was due to the fact that anticipating an earlier consecration he had set January 1st as the termination of his rectorship, and was for two months thereafter without work or means that he could with good conscience call his own.

A part of this time he spent in breaking in his friend, Dr. Cornelius Walker, as rector of Emmanuel. Dr. Walker was a refugee from Alexandria, also having no parish, but unlike his friend Wilmer, hav-

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ing no prospective diocese as salve. He did have a large family. He happened to be in the neighborhood when the election of Alabama came to Wilmer, and the outgoing rector at once settled upon him as his successor. He was not entirely a stranger to the congregation, having preached to them once or twice at Wilmer's request while they were worshipping in the old schoolhouse. The choice of Walker suited John Stewart, and the two carried the vestry. "It is with very peculiarly grateful recollection," writes Dr. Walker, "that I go back, and recall the various indications of Bishop Wilmer's kindness and sympathy. A day or two after the election he went around with me to the houses of various parishioners near, as a means of introduction. It was a bright, pleasant day. I was thus brought into acquaintanceship and communication with several of my future charge. Among them were two brothers, very plain working men, who had been brought by their first rector into the Church. Their names were Apostolic—they were Simon Peter and Andrew his brother. Many more of this class were brought into the Church through his influence, and when I went to the Church within the last twelve months (1904) found more than one of them there with their children and grandchildren."

This was during the closing weeks of December. On the first of January he vacated the rectory and turned over the parish house to his successor. During the next two months, while waiting for consecration, his residence was in Richmond.

All his household furniture, and his books and

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sermons, save a few of the latter needed for immediate use, were stored in a warehouse until the return of peace should make it possible to carry them to Alabama. Before that time came Richmond fell, the city was burned, and all the Bishop's effects were destroyed.

The consecration took place in St. Paul's Church, Richmond, on March 6th, 1862, Bishop Meade presiding, and Bishops Johns and Elliott joining in the Laying-on-of-hands. This was Bishop Meade's last public act. He returned from the Church to his death-bed.

## CHAPTER VI

### "THE CONFEDERATE BISHOP"

Bishop Wilmer lost no time in entering upon his episcopal duties. Ten days after the consecration he was preaching his first sermon in his new field, in St. John's, Montgomery (March 16th, the second Sunday in Lent). Throughout the Lenten season he worked in Mobile. In that city alone he confirmed ninety persons, and within six weeks he had visited nearly the whole southern portion of his diocese.

On May 1st the Diocesan Convention met in Christ Church, Mobile, and the Bishop preached the opening sermon on a favorite text: "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." The congregation was large, but the Convention numbered only fifteen clergymen and nineteen laymen. In size it contrasted pitifully with the larger Conventions of Old Virginia which the Bishop had taken as the norm of diocesan gatherings everywhere. But among its members were men that soon made the Bishop forget size, for they grappled his heart with bonds of steel—of the clergy, Thomas J. Beard, J. A. Massey, F. R. Hanson, and Stephen Uriah Smith, and of the laity R. S. Bunker and H. A. Schroeder of Mobile, Samuel G. Jones, of Montgomery, and H. A. Tayloe of Macon.

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Scarcely had the Bishop set foot on the soil of Alabama when he was called upon to decide some questions which tested his caliber and whose solution manifested the clear-headedness for which he was ever after famous.

Just as he arrived in Alabama it was becoming highly probable that Federal troops would soon occupy most of the State. When these troops took possession of towns where there were congregations of the Protestant Episcopal Church they would find a body of Christians praying in due course of their public worship for the President of the Confederate States. In such cases it was certain that trouble would ensue of such sort as had already been experienced in Virginia, where Dr. Wingfield of Portsmouth had been condemned to the chain-gang for not praying for the President of the United States, and in Louisiana, where General Butler had, in General Orders, stated that the omission in the Protestant Episcopal churches of New Orleans of the prayer for the President of the United States would be regarded as evidence of hostility to the Government of the United States and would render the offender subject to pains and penalties. In the face of approaching similar conditions the clergy of Alabama asked their Bishop for his Godly counsel in the premises.

The Bishop's reply was clear and decided: The Diocese of Alabama, an autonomous Church, had severed her connection with the Church in the United States, which was now a foreign Church. She had recognized the facts of geography as

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stated by a sovereign and independent power, and, gladly acquiescing, had for more than a year used the prayer for "those in Civil authority" not in a foreign country, but in the "Confederate States." The mere occupation of the soil by an invading force could not absolve Churchmen from their allegiance to the Government of their deliberate choice, for while armed soldiery might occasionally exercise power over them only the Confederate Government exercised authority. And finally, to allow military force to overawe them into praying for a government which they did not acknowledge to be their rightly constituted government would be to be guilty of untruthfulness and dishonor.

Would the Bishop, then, advise the clergy to use the prayer for the President of the Confederate States in the very teeth of the Federal soldiery?

By no means. Doing this they would certainly bring about scandalous scenes in the sanctuary, and invite even physical violence in the House of God. Their course would be: First, to inquire of the commanding officer whether he meant to interfere with public worship. Then, if he answered that he would either compel the prayer for the President of the United States to be used or all reference to civil authority to be omitted, to close the church, throwing the odium and responsibility of suspending the public worship of God upon those who sought to establish a state religion after their own imaginings.

Nearly all the clergy followed the course thus prescribed. One minister, however, insisted upon keeping his church open, and with precisely the re-

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sult that Bishop Wilmer had foreseen. When, in the course of the service, he was quietly passing from the "Collect for Grace" straight on to the Litany, intending to omit all reference to Presidents, and thinking thus to solve the difficulty in his own way, the Federal officer commanding, who had come to worship God, arose in the congregation and presented in no uncertain tone the alternatives of immediate use of the Prayer for the President of the United States or immediate cessation of the service. The poor clergyman lost his head completely and instantly chose the former alternative. Apologetically explaining his course to the Bishop shortly afterwards, he said, "I used the prayer, it is true, but under protest."

The Bishop's answer was grim: "I leave it for others to determine the status before God of a prayer made under protest."

The enforced closing of the Churches was not, however, immediate, and was never universal. For more than a year subsequently, only the Tennessee Valley was even temporarily in the hands of the Federal soldiers, and parish work went on elsewhere without undue incident.

While lines of communication were still unbroken, and facilities for travel were still fairly good, the General Council of the Church in the Confederate States of America met in Augusta, Georgia, November 12th, 1862, and remained in session ten days. To the young Bishop of Alabama it was refreshment and new strength to meet in official communication with his elder brethren of the Episcopate, and to receive



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the publicly marked assurance of the Council that the accomplished fact of his consecration eclipsed forever, in the mind of all who had objected to his consecration, any and every question of its validity and of his authority.

At the opening service three bishops who were the most ardent advocates of diocesan rights—Elliott, Johns, and Wilmer—administered the Holy Communion. Wilmer was made temporary Secretary of the House of Bishops, and later was a member of the Committees on Amendments of the Constitution and Foreign Missions, besides being assigned to much special committee work. He took active part in all discussions, and proved himself, though progressive, strongly opposed to all change merely for the sake of change or for any other reason than principle or demonstrable need. His position was generally based on the rule, "Let the ancient custom prevail," but reasonableness as well as antiquity claimed his allegiance. When, for example, the proposition was made to eliminate "Protestant Episcopal" from the title of the Church and substitute therefor "Holy Catholic," he opposed the movement for change solely on the ground that a branch of the Church could not properly claim for itself what was true only of the whole, and that the Protestant Episcopal Church could not consistently usurp to itself what it denied to the Roman Church.

The House of Bishops consisted of only eleven members. So did the original college of Apostles. And the spirit which pervaded this modern gathering was the self-same spirit that presided in the councils

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of the blessed Apostles. Bishop Wilmer often spoke of its breadth of vision, its atmosphere of love, its unquestioning hopefulness as something beyond the experience of ordinary assemblies of men. He attributed these characteristics largely, under God, to the presidency of Bishop Elliott of Georgia, the senior Bishop since Meade's death, a Bishop "unto whom utterance had been given, who sent forth to the world those words of peace and good will which sounded so sweet amid the din of war."

These words were the Pastoral Letter of the House of Bishops, which was written by Elliott, and which, in at least two particulars, gave immediate direction to the activities of the Bishop of Alabama. These particulars were: The religious instruction of the Negroes, and spiritual ministration to soldiers in camp and hospital.

The former was by far the most prominent topic in the Pastoral, for the instruction of the Negroes was, in the Bishop's words, "next to her own expansion, the Church's greatest work in these Confederate States. Not only our spiritual but our national life is wrapped up in their welfare. With them we stand or fall, and God will not permit us to be separated in interest or fortune. The time has come when the Church should press more urgently than she has hitherto done upon her laity the solemn fact that the slaves of the South are not merely so much property, but are a sacred trust committed to us, as a people, to be prepared for the work which God may have for them to do, in the future. While under this tutelage He freely gives to us their labor,

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but expects us to give back to them that religious and moral instruction which is to elevate them in the scale of being. It is likewise the duty of the Church to press upon the masters of the country their obligations, as Christian men, so to arrange this institution as not to necessitate the violation of those sacred relations which God has created, and which man cannot, consistently with Christian duty, annul. The systems of labor which prevail in Europe, and which are, in many respects, more severe than ours, are so arranged as to prevent all necessity for the separation of parents and children and of husbands and wives; and a very little care upon our part would rid the system upon which we are about to plant our national life of these un-Christian features. It belongs especially to the Episcopal Church to urge a proper teaching upon this subject, for in her fold and in her congregations are to be found a very large proportion of the great slave-holders of the country. We rejoice to be able to say that the public sentiment is rapidly becoming sound upon this subject, and that the Legislatures of several of the Confederate States have already taken steps towards this consummation. Hitherto have we been hindered by the pressure of abolitionism; now that we have thrown off from us that hateful and infidel pestilence, we should prove to the world that we are faithful to our trust, and the Church should lead the hosts of the Lord in this work of justice and mercy." Strong words and righteous, even if marred in their otherwise perfect spirit by one strong dash of partisan bitterness.

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The duty of giving spiritual ministrations to the soldiers was urged more briefly, but quite as strongly: "Far be it from us to say that there has been no Christian supervision of our soldiers, and we cheerfully concede all praise and thanks to those who have done their duty through danger and privation; but we must affirm that there is still a great lack of service on the Church's part in this connection. From whatever cause it has arisen, whether from the scarcity of clergymen, or from unwillingness to bear the hardships of the soldiers' life, we are obliged to acknowledge that we have been unable to find men who were willing to answer this call and to take their places, not as soldiers fighting for their country, but as soldiers fighting for the victory of Christ over sin and death. In the opinion of the House of Bishops, no position is more suited, at this moment, to the true spirit of Christ and His Church, than that of a faithful minister of the grace of God and of the Sacraments of the Church to the soldiers in the field, or in the hospital; and we would urge it upon these ministers who have been exiled from their parishes, to enter upon this work as their present duty, trusting for support to Him who has said: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' "

To these two recommendations must be referred the activity of Bishop Wilmer along these lines when he went back home late in November. In every way possible he encouraged the religious instruction of the Negro. In the Black Belt numerous chapels were erected by the planters for their slaves. Stickney, Cushman, Jarratt, Christian, and other

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devoted presbyters of the Diocese of Alabama gave themselves almost exclusively to ministering to the Negro. Stickney alone cared for the slaves on eight large plantations in Marengo County and "the Canebrake," preaching, baptizing, communicating, organizing into classes and watchmen, imposing penance on evil-livers, and in many ways reverting to early ecclesiastical discipline in his earnest but, in the outcome, vain attempt to impress upon this volatile people the indissolubility of morality and religion. Menaeos ministered to five such congregations just north of Stickney's field, and on a single occasion baptized twenty-five Negro children. In the first year of his episcopate the Bishop confirmed forty-five Negroes, the next year thirty-nine, and the year after fifty-two. On no occasion did he visit a plantation without holding a special service for the Negroes and speaking a few words of counsel and encouragement. He felt, as he had always felt, that the slavery of the Negro in America was to be overruled for good and that those in Christian households were, in the Providence of God, to be the leaven for the whole race in the days of their inevitable freedom. In 1864, in Tuscaloosa alone, where the Reverend R. D. Nevius was interesting himself in the Christianizing of the slaves, he confirmed twenty-one Negro adults. It is remarkable that such spirit was shown and such work conducted throughout the horrors of a war of which, whatever the underlying cause, the Negro was the immediate occasion; and what was done is creditable not only to the immediate workers but also to those who per-

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mitted and encouraged the undertaking.

The Bishop was equally zealous in caring for the soldiers. Not carried off his feet by the enthusiasm of some who urged upon him that the religious interests of the young men in the army were paramount to all other considerations and that the churches should be closed and the clergy sent to the front, he contended that regard must be had not only to the immediate wants of individuals, but also to the future and permanent interests of society, and in only one instance did he advise a clergyman already fully and successfully engaged in parish work to abandon his position for one in the army. But as Federal occupation shut up the "disloyal Episcopal churches" he encouraged the dispossessed clergy to betake themselves to camp. As the situation grew darker, and every able-bodied man armed himself for war, and congregations were reduced to women, children, and disabled men, the army chaplains increased in number, and the good effect of their work showed itself in the more numerous confirmations of young men at home on furlough. In the conciliar year, 1863-64, the Bishop confirmed three hundred and thirty-seven persons.

A single paragraph shows how the Bishop felt about this work. A chaplain had desired to return to the quieter walks of parish life, and the Bishop felt constrained to write thus: "I cannot help lamenting, for the sake of the soldiers, that you have left the army. You have done noble service in it, and it is highly appreciated. I think that you have peculiar talents for doing good in the position which

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you occupied at your entrance into the service. Why not take the position again? The increased pay of a chaplaincy would support you now, and you cannot well be spared. As a surgeon you would be invaluable, and thus most legitimately fulfill a part of your sacred functions. I know no vacant parish in the Diocese of Alabama which would pay the board of a single man. The planter has no money, and no meat to speak of. We shall all have to practice self-denial."

As the war progressed a new sphere of beneficence opened to the Church. The first-fruit of the battle fields was orphans, and many of these were left entirely destitute. To such as she found out the Church became a veritable nursing-mother. St. John's, Montgomery, was the first parish to undertake systematically the care of the orphans. Its "Bishop Cobbs Orphans' Home" was in operation throughout the entire conflict, and when the Federal troops occupied the city the commanding officer, ascertaining that the Home was named after his old rector in Cincinnati, detailed a special guard to protect the Home and furnished it with a month's supply of provisions.

The Bishop having commended this parish's benevolence to the diocese as worthy of imitation, the Council of 1864 passed a series of resolutions calling on every parish within the diocese to establish a similar institution. The endorsement of the Bishop's desire to look more carefully after the helpless was gratifying, but the Council's action was rather more sweeping than the Bishop was prepared for. In his

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opinion two Homes in addition to that already in existence would amply supply every need, and he settled upon Mobile and Tuskaloosa as the places where the orphans could be collected the most easily.

The attempt which the Bishop made at Mobile was a decided failure. The expense in Confederate money would have been enormous. The enemy were even then almost at the gates of the city. The business men of the city were so straitened to obtain the necessities of life for to-day, so doubtful of the morrow, that they were in no mood to hear of the planting of another institution to whose support they must contribute. The Churchmen of the place, in preliminary consultation with the Bishop, emphatically discountenanced even a tentative canvass for subscriptions and the Bishop, reluctantly enough, retired from the field.

The attempt at Tuskaloosa was more successful. The rector and vestry showed the deepest interest and gave more than eight thousand dollars. All the parishes in that section of the State were appealed to for help, and all responded most liberally. Marion gave over six thousand dollars; Selma, Demopolis, and Faunsdale, five thousand dollars each, and Greensboro, his home, thirteen thousand. In a short time fifty thousand dollars had been secured. With thirty thousand of this a building lot and garden were bought, and a dwelling and schoolhouse erected. Ten thousand dollars were set aside for investment in real estate with a view to endowment, and the remainder was reserved for current expenses.

During the first few months of its existence only



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eight orphans were received into the Home, but in conjunction with the Home a parochial school of fifty pupils was conducted. The immediate charge of this work was committed to three deaconesses, whom the Bishop set apart by prayer, but without imposition of hands, in Christ Church, Tuskaloosa, on December 20, 1864. The institution of the order of deaconesses proved that Bishop Wilmer did not attribute all Episcopal powers to canons made and provided. This order, though primitive, had no place in the American Church. But men of breadth of vision could not wait for a slow-moving General Convention to give its *imprimatur* to the exercising of an inherent right and the supplying of an urgent necessity. Dr. Muhlenberg had set apart one woman to do the work of deaconess in the parish of the Holy Communion, New York, 1845. Bishop Whittingham had instituted a similar order in St. Andrew's parish, Baltimore, in 1855. These two staunch Churchmen were Bishop Wilmer's only predecessors in making deaconesses, but what they agreed upon was, to him, sufficient warrant for any ecclesiastical departure.

The Council of 1863 met a little more than a year after the consecration of Bishop Wilmer. The Bishop had by this time familiarized himself with the duties of the Episcopal Office, whose harness fitted easily to his natural dignity, and with the necessities of the work whose ramifications he held easily in view. In his annual address he recited certain of the conditions which demanded attention: Alabama had suffered less, so far, than any other Southern State.

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Several clergymen from other dioceses swelled the ministerial force. Nearly every established congregation was supplied with stated services. So far, so good. But the hindrances to supplying the few vacant fields were many: Vestries were reluctant to assume pecuniary responsibilities which they saw little hope of discharging. Clergymen were unwilling, in the absence of definite engagements, to incur the expense of removal. And since candidates for Orders were not exempt from military duty it was impossible to procure newly ordained men. In view of these conditions the Bishop strongly urged the clergy to multiply their labors, and, altogether apart from financial arrangements, to extend their stated ministrations to neighboring vacant congregations; and upon the laity he urged sufficient generosity of purse and time to make this extension of clerical service practicable. The vows of ordination and the commission to preach the Gospel were not, he said, matters of private contract, and were not to be narrowed to a purely money basis. He congratulated the clergy that although their incomes had been diminished and the cost of living had been increased four-fold there had not been one word of complaint. At the same time he exhorted the laity to emulate the early disciples, who "sold their possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need," and he emphasized the peculiar appropriateness of such Scriptural action by Churchmen who claim an Apostolic constitution and a primitive creed.

His vision broadened as he wrote these things,

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and passing from present conditions to eternal purposes he made a noble and uplifting generalization:

"It may be that God designs, through the instrumentality of great suffering, to purify His Church, and to arouse his people to the long-forgotten and neglected duties of self-denial and charity. His judgment begins with the House of God; because the Church, like salt, preserves the world, and the world is preserved for the Church, as the casket is for the jewel's sake. All the events that transpire upon this globe look to the extension and purification of the Church. The revolutions of States, the plottings of Statesmen, the shock of arms and the fortunes of war, are only vitally important in so far as they bear upon this one consummation—the extension of that Kingdom which shall know no end, and which shall at last absorb all dominion into itself."

In the summer of 1863 the Bishop returned to Virginia for some rest. Making his headquarters at Brook Hill he went into Richmond nearly every day on an errand of mercy to the Federal soldiers confined in Libby Prison or on Belle Isle. Generally he was accompanied by Miss Emily Mason and by Judge Perkins, of Louisiana, each bearing such succor, physical, intellectual, or spiritual, as was in his or her power. It took both intellectual and physical succor to reconcile the prisoners to corn bread, or "pone bread," to which they had an almost unconquerable aversion; and the party often carried to them other portions of the rations of hungry Confederate soldiers, who gave gladly such as they had.

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It was during this visit, and while Mrs. Wilmer was with friends in Powhatan County, that the Bishop's latest-born came to him—William Holland, who was born on August 26th, 1863.

In November of the same year the Bishop was back in Greensboro, Alabama, and in his first letter to John Stewart wrote as follows: "I have been going without intermission since I saw you, and have done a large amount of work. Upon our journey out we lost three connections and staid all night in passages and sitting-rooms. I was in bed once in seven days. Upon the heel of this I had more than a month's continuous work, preaching and traveling without intermission. Yet I was never in better health, and seldom feel weariness. I am learning to endure fatigue, and thus one of 'my most dreaded evils has by a kind providence been, so far, removed from me."

Chickamauga and Chattanooga had just been fought, and the Bishop had some pronounced views as to the men more closely related to conditions thereabout: "I saw much of General Polk a few weeks since," he wrote on November 28th, 1863. "From what he told me I was led to expect the result brought us by to-day's mail from the Army of Tennessee. The General said that President Davis wished him to resume command of his old corps, treated his relief by Bragg as unworthy of a Court of Inquiry, etc. He told the President that he would take any position under any other commander, but that he had long enough been the victim of Bragg's imbecility. There must be something wrong in a

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chief who so governs his army as to be without the aid of such men as Polk, Cheatham, and Buckner in the moment of strife. The President lacks, I am sorry to be compelled to believe, the quality so much needed of yielding gracefully to a great necessity. A very great man would not have allowed matters to stand at Chickamauga as he found them. But he is as great as God made him to be, and as God's purposes allow him to be. A great chastening with all its attendant blessings would not take place if men were always wise. A protracted war would not last if decisive victories were frequently gained by either party. An indecisive battle is a continued blister, and that the patient needs. It is very painful, but it is more endurable than the disease."

In April of this year the Confederate Congress had passed a property tax of eight per cent, license taxes on various occupations, a graded income tax, a tax of ten per cent on the profits from sales of food-stuffs and a few other commodities, and a tax in kind, a sort of tithe, on the products of agriculture. The Bishop commented on various aspects of the situation: "We are paying taxes here," he wrote, "heavily, if not cheerfully. The congested condition has been too long continued to allow us to hope for healthy reaction. The arterial circulation has not been counterpoised by sufficient venous circulation—hence, congestion. The people were more ripe for taxation two years ago than now. Heavy taxation then might have staved off the present state of things. Bonding won't do, except to a limited extent; it merely changes the form of indebtedness.

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The secret of depreciation is to be sought mainly in the general doubt of capacity to redeem. But, wisdom here too would not have consisted with the purposes of God towards a mammonish generation.

"I rejoice to think that a people who made scorn of paying tithes to establish the Kingdom of Peace are compelled to disgorge them for the purposes of making war—a retribution approaching the region of philosophy and poetry. Nations, as well as men, avoid treatment for disease by obeying the laws of health. So fully am I impressed with what I think I discern of the aim and tendency of the treatment which we are now going through, that, save for the sorrow and death reigning around me, I could almost exult in view of the exhibition of Divine power and wisdom."

By 1864 the Federal armies were marching through such portions of the South as they pleased, and only the blindest optimism could fail to see the meaning of it all. Federal authority began to up-rear itself here and there. Federal troops were quartered in the most important towns and cities. To many persons further struggle seemed both useless and foolish, and, protected by the strong arm of the Northern soldiery from hurt at the hands of more constant men, these men took the oath of allegiance to the United States. Of such Bishop Wilmer spoke his mind in no measured terms:

"I rarely hear from you," he wrote from Greensboro, under date of February 11th, 1864, "that I do not receive the tidings of the death of some near friend. Shortly some mutual friend will do the

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same sad work for one of us. But I mourn more for the living dead—those who have been forced by timidity or cupidity to take a hated oath. What would some of those men have said, three years ago, if they had been told that they would so degrade themselves? So true is it that all men stand until they fall, and that most of our fancied virtue is the absence of temptation. Worse than this is the prevailing disposition to justify it. Deplorable enough to sin, but awful to justify the evil doing. Many have sinned as David did; few have repented and confessed as he did. I look upon these pitiable ones as the dead who have no hope of a resurrection.

“There is some great mystery in the mode by which the minds of a people are influenced. Judging from the reports of measures in Congress I should conclude that God, in his wisdom, had withdrawn the usual supply of the judgment that he ordinarily vouchsafes to man. He gave to Solomon wisdom as his chiefest gift. May he not withdraw it as his direst punishment? Does it not seem that bodies of men are frequently as much wanting in intellect as in conscience? How often do you see it that a body of men will reach a conclusion which scarcely an individual of that body would have reached in judgment and in conscience.

“I hear sad accounts from North Carolina,” he concludes. “The majority there are in favor of a Convention. Many see not the full drift. The leaders do; and, while they disclaim the logical and necessary conclusion, press the matter. Meanwhile there is general apathy and ill-disguised disaffection.

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From my soul I pity President Davis, and pray for him from a full heart. How can his system stand the anxiety of the time? My own mind, thank God, is hopeful, and, I trust, in some sort resigned. But it is easy to resign one's self to what you don't think will happen, and, hence, I distrust myself. \* \* Who can tell at what moment his nerve will fail? Poor Peter would have a large company of sympathizers at this time. Would that they could have his grace to weep bitterly in the retrospect."

The Bishop did not content himself with standing by and moralizing. With pen and tongue he sought to better things in Church, in State, and in Army. In a letter to Mr. Memminger, Secretary of the Treasury, he took strong ground against the current system of taxation, which, because it was in kind and not in money, fell heavily upon the consumer, and practically left the producer untouched; and he found the Secretary entirely in accord with him—but, unfortunately, the Secretary was not the legislative authority. In correspondence with Bishop Elliott he was casting about for a better system of army chaplaincies, suggesting that Bishop Lay be made Missionary Bishop of the Army of Northern Georgia, with temporary jurisdiction over all chaplains, and he instructed his own clergy serving with the army to make their reports to that Bishop; and he found Bishop Elliott heartily in favor of the plan—but to the other bishops the plan presented insuperable difficulties. He outlined a tentative scheme for a Church Publishing House and for the establishment of a distributing agency for religious



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literature at Atlanta—but Bishop Lay was the only prominent ecclesiastic outside of Alabama who favored the project. In Alabama it was endorsed by the Council of 1864 as to its essential feature, the distribution of religious and devotional works among the soldiers. Diocesan missionary funds were used freely in meeting the expense incurred in furnishing hundreds of Prayer Books to the army and in publishing tracts and pamphlets in large editions. After some months the scheme came to an untimely end through the breaking of lines of communication, but it subserved its purpose in large measure, for many a holier thought was kindled and nobler aspiration aroused, as privates and officers, wearying of inconsequential talk, would pore over the literature in the flickering light of the camp-fire, and many of these thoughts and aspirations came to the birth and did right valiant service in after years.

But whatever the things that interested the Bishop, nothing prevented him from seeing to it that Alabama's quota of chaplains was kept full. A letter which he received in this period from Dr. Quintard, then an army chaplain and thereafter to be Bishop of Tennessee, tells him about several of these chaplains, and incidentally throws much light upon contemporary affairs:

“Atlanta, Ga., 14 June, '64.

“My Dear Bp.:

“Quite used up, run down, weary and sick, I am in no condition to write, but as I can do nothing else I will make an extra effort, as I am very anxious to commune with you. Have no fear that I intend to

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write a bilious or dyspeptic epistle, because my juices are dried up, my knees weak, and my brain sluggish. The truth is, I want to chat with you as a friend. I need advice, and your kindness aforetime draws my heart towards you.

“The possibility may arise—I don’t think it will—which may render it expedient for me to leave Atlanta with my family—consisting of one wife, three children, and three servants. Already we hear the boom of guns not far distant. I cannot think it expedient for me to remain in Atlanta, provided the enemy gets here—but what shall I do? Aye, there’s the rub. I know that one of the old Latin poets says, “Fortitude delights in hardships,” and for myself I could submit. But wife and children—they must be preserved from the outrages and insults of vandals more bent on destruction than those that followed Genseric. Already I have lost my all of earthly goods. In Nashville my losses were heavy, but I still had an income sufficient to support my family. Next came my loss at Rome, Ga., of some \$75,000, an interest in rolling-mill. And now my interest from the cotton factory is cut off. Well, I give it all up cheerfully. Jehovah jireh! I have no tears to shed. I feel that I have not one sigh to burden my heart. Still I am anxious to get such a position as will enable me to sustain my family, and if there is any locality in your diocese where I can obtain board at reasonable rates I should like to know it; for I may be—mark, I say may be—compelled to beat a retreat with an empty haversack and a very lean purse. If you have advice to give, prepare to give it now.

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"Freeman has prepared an admirable tract for publication entitled "Brief Hints on the Church." It is an old tract recast, admirable in tone and clear in teaching. I shall forward it to Everhart at once. Gholson, Baird [sic—should be Beard], and Jarratt are at the front. Beckwith [then of Demopolis, Ala., afterwards Bishop of Georgia,] the glorious fellow, the golden-mouthed, has been in the hospitals here for a week. He goes to the front to-morrow. If I can gain strength I shall go with him. I am extremely weak, and feel very worthless.

"We have had terrible weather for some days, but now the "nimble darting sun" threatens to melt the clouds away and give us shine again.

"With warmest regards I am yours ever in Christ and His Church,

"C. T. QUINTARD."

"P. S.—I have on hand your check for \$500.00 on Montgomery. Should have acknowledged before."

The attempt of Bishop Wilmer to bolster up his own waning confidence in the ultimate success of Southern arms was, in the light of the outcome of the war, pathetic. He drew on Nature and Revelation alike for thoughts that would conceal the nakedness of facts. At one time he said, "Affairs look cloudy just now, but the clouds bring rain." Again, "One cannot suffer a grievous fall without being first raised to a great height: I cannot but regard the present elevation of the Yankees as the necessary preliminary to their ultimate casting down." At another time, "The rod will be lifted up when the child repents and makes confession: President Davis was

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confirmed in Richmond last week by Bishop Johns." As late as August 24th, 1864, he could write: "The war party [in the North] is in its last convulsions. Alabama and Georgia are suffering from its dying kicks." When the renomination of Lincoln demonstrated the incorrectness of this diagnosis, he could, in his boundless optimism, fancy that he saw a silver lining to the cloud: "I had hoped for a peace candidate from the Chicago convention. But we have anything else. Therefore it is that I desire to see Lincoln re-elected. I would fain get rid of a fresh swarm of flies. Therefore it is, also, that I regard the state of things at Atlanta as anything but an unmitigated calamity. It tends to promote the re-election of Lincoln. Should McClellan be elected, and should he propose a reconstruction of the Union on its old basis, with the guarantee of property, etc., I should be afraid that the proposition would divide ourselves, and place us at the mercy of the North. Great numbers are hopeless in regard to our ability to resist the efforts being made for our subjugation, and are, consequently, ready to grasp at peace on the condition of retaining their property during their lifetime. I should be afraid to test the issue at the polls. On the other hand, Lincoln's policy necessitates union among ourselves, and therefore I prefer the alternative of his election, and accept whatever of reverses to our arms may be necessary to secure that result."

And when all was over, and the issue was decided adversely to the South, he could, with stout heart and with faith like unto that of the patriarchs who

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departed hence "not having received the promise," still look forward to a time when the South's contention should receive justification at the hands of mankind: "History records no more gallant struggle under more gallant leaders than the South made. The issue being against us, multitudes changed their opinions, and said, 'They must have been striving against right, or God would have given them victory.' But such reasoning cannot hold. It proves too much. Right, in the end and long future, will get its reward, but in ways and modes of God's own ordination, and not after man's measurements or upon man's small balances, which are not equal to judge and weigh such magnitudes as are involved in the divine plan with nations."

## CHAPTER VII

### "GENERAL ORDERS NO. 38"

The close of the war of the Secession brought with it the overturning of the Confederate Government, the subverting of existing laws in the seceded states, the abrogation of their Constitutions, and the annihilation of their entire civil polity. Alabama was a military province. Her Governor was held under duress. Federal soldiers administered public affairs, executive, judicial, and legislative.

So long as the Confederacy had upheld itself by force of arms, the Prayer Book prayer for the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority had been used with the word "Confederate" substituted for "United." But the Bishop of Alabama did not believe in prayers for the dead, and with the passing of the Confederate States he had directed that the prayer, as used, be discontinued. In his judgment, however, it did not follow that of necessity the prayer should be used in its original form. Plainly, conditions were not such as the prayer contemplated. The entire State was under military authority, not under civil. Moreover, the prospect was good for the continued occupation of the State by soldiers and for its permanent reduction to the status of a military province. For such a condition

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Bishop Wilmer felt that neither he nor his clergy could ask long continuance. They could most heartily pray to God to give the military power "grace to execute justice and to maintain truth," but they could not ask God to grant their Commander-in-chief "health, prosperity, and long life." In fact, the Bishop frankly confessed that for the existing state of government, impersonated in the President, he desired the least length of days, and the least measure of prosperity consistent with the permissive will of God.

With this feeling the Bishop, on June 20th, 1865, issued the following Pastoral Letter to the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Alabama:

"The lapse of the Confederate Government does not necessarily involve the disorganization of the General Council of the Church within the limits of that Government. The nationality of a church is a matter purely conventional, and of human arrangement. It is assuredly possible for two church organizations to exist under one common civil government without violating the unity of the Church. There is an essential difference between the unity of branches of the Church and their union in one legislative body. For example, the Church in England is in perfect unity with the Church in the United States; but there is no legislative union between these churches. Again, and this is a case more nearly in point, the Church in Scotland is in unity with the Church in England, and yet they exist as separate organizations under a common civil government. Consequently, no charge of schism can just-

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ly lie against the Church in the Southern States in case she should see fit to perpetuate herself through a separate organization. She does not thereby necessarily depart from the unity of the Church in doctrine, discipline, or order. Therefore, it may or may not, as circumstances indicate, be advisable and expedient to dissolve the General Council. This is a question for future ecclesiastical determination.

"As to the change in the language of certain prayers which is made necessary by late political events, I observe that the lapse of the Confederate Government requires, of necessity, the omission of the 'Prayer for the President of the Confederate States and all in civil authority.'

"The immediate substitution of another form of prayer does not follow of the same necessity, as will appear from the following considerations:

"To pray for all in authority is, unquestionably, a duty, but a duty of religious, and not of political, origin and obligation. The mode of discharging that duty must be determined by the proper ecclesiastical authority. Consequently, any attempt on the part of a civil or military power to dictate to the Church in this matter cannot but be regarded as unauthorized and intrusive. Certain tests of loyalty have been established by authority, and they who faithfully conform to these tests have fulfilled the requirements of the law, and have a right, in equity and under the Constitution of the country, to manage their ecclesiastical affairs according to their own discretion. The Church has due regard to established authority, and is not to be presumed regard-



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less of her sacred obligations. She must be left free and untrammelled in her legitimate sphere of action. Any attempt to dictate to her can only serve to retard the action which, in pursuance of her obligations to God and to her own traditions, she will unquestionably take at the proper time and in the proper manner.

“Now the Church in this country has established a form of prayer ‘for the President and all in civil authority.’ The language of that prayer was selected with careful reference to the subject of the prayer—‘All in civil authority; and she desires for that authority prosperity and long continuance. No one can reasonably be expected to desire a long continuance of military rule. Therefore, the prayer is altogether inappropriate and inapplicable to the present condition of things, when no civil authority exists in the exercise of its functions. Hence, as I remarked in the Circular (of May 30th), ‘We may yield a true allegiance to, and sincerely pray for grace, wisdom, and understanding in behalf of, a government founded upon force, while at the same time we could not, in good conscience, ask for it continuance, prosperity,’ etc., etc.

“When the Civil Authority shall be restored, it will be eminently proper for the Church to resume the use of that form of prayer which has been established by the highest ecclesiastical authorities, and which has for so many years constituted a part of her Liturgy.

“You are aware that in time past I have expressed a strong desire ‘that the regular and ordinary forms

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of public worship should be so entirely Catholic in character as to be adapted to all exigencies of time, place, and circumstance,' and that I urged this matter upon the attention of our Diocesan Council in 1864, with a view to action at the approaching General Council. I still entertain the preference which I then expressed, but it is not for me, in my individual capacity, to introduce into the Liturgy any other form of words than that which the Church, in her collective and legislative capacity, has already established.

"My conclusion is, therefore, and my direction which I hereby give, that when civil authority shall be restored in the State of Alabama, the Clergy shall use the form entitled, 'A Prayer for the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority,' as it stands in the Book of Common Prayer.

"And my counsel to the Clergy and Laity is, to heed the teachings of the Church in regard to the Scriptural obedience due to 'the powers that be;' and, whilst carefully maintaining the inherent prerogatives of the Church within her sphere, faithfully to discharge their duties to the State; thus fulfilling the injunction of our Lord—'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'

"The doctrine of the Church upon this point is briefly, but most comprehensively, summed up in her 37th Article of Religion: 'The Power of the Civil Magistrate extendeth to all men, as well Clergy as Laity, in all things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual. And we hold it to be

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the duty of all men who are professors of the Gospel, to pay respectful obedience to the Civil Authority, regularly and legitimately constituted.'

"In regard to the taking of oaths:—It is beyond all question the duty of every citizen to render faithful allegiance to the government under which he lives, and an oath of fidelity to the government is only the formal and solemn acknowledgment and expression of an already existing obligation. If, therefore, the oath of allegiance should be lawfully required of all citizens, there is no good reason why such oaths should not be taken; provided, that all things be done (see 39th Article) 'in justice, judgment, and truth.' All false swearing is an abomination.

"And now, brethren, commending you to the guidance and protection of God, and earnestly praying that all things may be ordered to the advancement of His glory, the good of His Church, and the safety, honor, and welfare of His people, I am yours faithfully in Christ and His Church.

"RICH'D H. WILMER,

"Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama.

"Greensboro', Ala., June 20, 1865."

This Pastoral Letter was received by the Churchmen of Alabama with hearty approval. The clergy fell into line, and services were conducted according to the Bishop's direction, with the prayer for the President of the United States omitted. Throughout the summer the Federal authorities took no notice of the omission, and restoration of the prayer

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might have come about peaceably had not the officiousness of one man used the resentment of another to make mischief. Major General Thomas, the Federal commander of the Military Division of the Tennessee, to which belonged the Department of Alabama, was a Virginian, and Bishop Wilmer had, all through the war, been unsparing of him as a "renegade." This characterization of him was not confined to the Bishop of Alabama, but in Wilmer's hands it was especially caustic. When, therefore, "Parson Brownlow," the Reconstruction governor of Tennessee, brought Wilmer's Pastoral Letter to General Thomas's attention, nothing more was needed to make the General's personal enemy appear an enemy to the Republic. The machinery was set in motion, and General Woods was directed to investigate the matter and take prescribed action.

The coming clash between the ecclesiastical authority and the military was made known to the Bishop, and as Mobile was both the Department headquarters and the seat of the Church's greatest strength, and the storm center would be there, the Bishop left his home in Greensboro and went down to Mobile to be on the scene of action.

Scarcely had he arrived in the city when General Woods, hearing of his arrival, sent an officer of his staff to ask "when the Bishop intended to use the Prayer for the President of the United States."

The Bishop replied that as the question was asked in a tone of authority he declined to answer it.

The officer then proposed to talk the matter over "as between man and man."

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The Bishop acceded to this proposition, and the officer asked: "When do you think that you will use the Prayer Book prayer for the President?"

"When you all get away from here," was the reply of the Bishop; and he then asked the officer if, with conditions reversed and the Confederate heel on the neck of the Union, he could sincerely ask for life, health, and prosperity to the Confederate President?

The officer excitedly exclaimed that he would be—something very dreadful—if he would.

"Well," returned the Bishop, "I am not disposed to use your phraseology; but, if I do that thing that you come to order me to do—address the Almighty with my lips, when my heart is not in my prayer—I run great danger of meeting the doom that you have hypothetically invoked upon your own head."

The officer then returned to General Woods. A few days later—exactly three months after the appearance of the Bishop's offending Pastoral—the following remarkable document was promulgated from military headquarters at Mobile:

"HEADQUARTERS

"DEPARTMENT OF ALABAMA,

"Mobile, Ala., Sept. 20, 1865.

"GENERAL ORDERS, NO. 38.

"The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States has established a form of Prayer to be used for 'the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority.' During the continuance of the late wicked and groundless rebellion the prayer was changed to one for the President of the Confederate States, and, so altered, was used in the Protestant

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Episcopal churches of the Dioceses of Alabama.

"Since the 'lapse' of the Confederate Government and the restoration of the authority of the United States over the late rebellious States the prayer for the President has been altogether omitted in the Episcopal churches of Alabama.

"This omission was recommended by the Right Rev. Richard Wilmer, Bishop of Alabama, in a letter to the clergy and laity, dated June 20, 1865. The only reason given by Bishop Wilmer for the omission of the prayer, which, to use his own language, 'was established by the highest ecclesiastical authorities, and has for many years constituted a part of the Liturgy of the Church,' is stated by him in the following words:

" 'Now, the Church in this country has established a form of prayer for the President and all in civil authority. The language of the prayer was selected with careful reference to the subject of the prayer—"All in Civil Authority;" and she desires for that authority prosperity and long continuance. No one can reasonably be expected to desire a long continuance of military rule. Therefore, the prayer is altogether inappropriate and inapplicable to the present condition of things, when no civil authority exists in the exercise of its functions. Hence, as I remarked in the Circular, "we may yield a true allegiance to, and sincerely pray for grace, wisdom, and understanding in behalf of, a government founded upon force, while at the same time we could not in good conscience ask for its continuance, prosperity,"' etc., etc.

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“It will be observed from this extract—1st, That the Bishop, because he cannot pray for the continuance of ‘military rule,’ therefore declines to pray for those in authority. 2nd, He declares the prayer inappropriate and inapplicable, because no civil authority (exists) in the exercise of its functions.

“On the 20th of June, the date of this letter, there was a President of the United States, a Cabinet, Judges of the Supreme Court, and thousands of other civil officers of the United States, all in the exercise of their functions. It was for them specially that this form of prayer was established, yet the Bishop cannot among all these find any subject worthy of his prayers. Since the publication of this letter, a Civil Governor has been appointed for the State of Alabama, and in every county Judges and Sheriffs have been appointed, and all these are, and for weeks have been, in the exercise of their functions; yet the prayer has not been restored.

“The prayer which the Bishop advised to be omitted is not a prayer for the continuance of military rule, or the continuance of any particular form of government, or any particular person in power. It is simply a prayer for the temporal and spiritual weal of the persons in whose behalf it is offered. It is a prayer to the High and Mighty Ruler of the Universe that He would with His power behold and bless the President of the United States and all others in authority—that he would replenish them with the grace of His Holy Spirit that they may always incline to His will and walk in His ways; that he would endow them plenteously with heavenly gifts, grant

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them in health and prosperity long to live, and finally after this life to attain everlasting joy and felicity. It is a prayer at once applicable and appropriate, and which any heart not filled with hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, could conscientiously offer.

"The advice of the Bishop to omit this prayer, and its omission by the clergy, is not only a violation of the canons of the Church, but shows a factious and disloyal spirit, and is a marked insult to every loyal citizen within the Department. Such men are unsafe teachers, and not to be trusted in places of power and influence over public opinion.

"It is therefore ordered, pursuant to the instructions of Major General Thomas, commanding the military division of Tennessee, that said Richard Wilmer, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Alabama, and the Protestant Episcopal clergy of said diocese be, and they are hereby, forbidden to preach or perform divine service, and that their places of worship be closed, until such a time as said Bishop and clergy show a sincere return to their allegiance to the Government of the United States, and give evidence of a loyal and patriotic spirit by offering to resume the use of the prayer for the President of the United States and all in civil authority, and by taking the amnesty oath prescribed by the President.

"This prohibition shall continue in each individual case until special application is made through the military channels of these headquarters for permission to preach and perform divine service, and until



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such application is approved at these or superior headquarters.

“District commanders are required to see that this order is carried into effect.

“By order of Major General Chas. R. Woods.

“FRED. H. WILSON, A. A. G.”

This official order of suspension was published in the daily papers of Mobile next morning, and came to Bishop Wilmer’s attention in no other way. After sleeping over the matter, the Bishop on the day following, sent the following communication to General Woods:

“Mobile, Sept. 22, 1865.

“To Major Gen. Chas. R. Woods,

“Head Qrs. Dept. of Ala.

“Dear Sir:—

“I see in the morning papers of this city an order, issued under your authority, forbidding the Bishop of Alabama and his Clergy to ‘preach or perform Divine Service,’ etc.

“The object of this note is to inquire if it is your purpose, by the intervention of military force, to obstruct me, or any of my clergy, in the performance of ministerial duties.

“I do not, for a moment, recognize the right of any Civil or Military Officer to dictate to me in the performance of my duty in the Church of God. At the same time, I have neither the wish nor the power to resist military force.

“The expression, on your part, of a determination to oppose the celebration of Divine Service by force of arms will be regarded by me as equivalent to a

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forcible ejection from the precincts of the Sanctuary.

"In making the above inquiry I wish clearly to define my position:

"I have issued a Pastoral, (a part only of which is quoted in your 'General Orders') to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Alabama. The positions therein stated were taken with great deliberation, and I see no cause, and can see no cause, other than the intervention of a higher Ecclesiastical authority, to reconsider them.

"Standing upon the provisions of the Constitution which I have sworn 'faithfully to defend,' and also upon that inherent independence and supremacy of the Church (in all matters pertaining to her doctrine, discipline, and worship), to which alone I hold myself answerable for any alleged violation of her laws and usages, and which alone, as I maintain, has the right to suspend the exercise of Episcopal and Ministerial functions—I do most respectfully, but most firmly, enter my solemn protest against the interference expressed in your 'General Orders.'

"Will you do me the favor to reply to this at your earliest convenience?

"Yours respectfully,

"RICHARD H. WILMER,

"Bishop of Alabama."

To this inquiry General Woods very curtly responded that if his orders were disobeyed he would certainly use military force to close the churches.

Upon reception of this note Bishop Wilmer again wrote to General Woods and told him that being

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about to issue a Pastoral to his flock he would like to have the General's permission to quote his General Order and the ensuing correspondence. But the General was too wary to be thus entrapped into an involuntary acquiescence in the Bishop's exercise of his Episcopal functions. He not only declined to give the permission, but he forbade the issuance of the Pastoral.

The Bishop ignored the General's refusal and his command. The Pastoral appeared a few days later (September 28th), and it contained the matter that the General had directed him not to publish. In this Pastoral the Bishop said:

"It does not become me to enter into any argument with the Military Authorities upon the merits or the case. It may fairly be presumed that, in all things pertaining to the 'Honor of the Church,' her Bishops and Clergy are better informed and more deeply concerned than all other persons. Besides, I could not enter into the discussion of this question with any Secular Power without appearing to recognize its rights to make inquisition into matters Ecclesiastical. For, as I showed in my first Pastoral, the obligation to pray at all is a matter of religious, and not of political, origin. And it is obvious, at the first glance, that if the Secular Authority be allowed to prescribe, in one iota, in regard to the worship of the Church, there is no assignable limit to its possible usurpation of prerogative.

"A brief exhibition of the Ecclesiastical Status of the Diocese of Alabama will enable you, at a glance, to detect the misapprehension of facts under which

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the 'General Orders' referred to were dictated; and will serve to vindicate you, as Churchmen, in pursuing the course of action recommended in this Pastoral.

"The 'Orders' charge us with a violation of the Canons of the Church, and from this violation they argue an animus; upon the strength of which they are issued.

"Now, to say nothing of the incongruity involved in such a procedure on the part of the Military Authorities towards the Church, it will be sufficient for my present purpose to state, and that for your satisfaction, that there is no Canon, of the Church of which we are members, that requires us to use the Prayer 'ordered.' On the contrary, the requirement of the 'General Council,' (as yet unrepealed, because there has been no recent session of that Body), is to use another Prayer—which Prayer has ceased of necessity.

"Now, the Diocese of Alabama is a component part of the 'General Council,' and I, as Bishop of the Diocese, have never made any 'Declaration of Conformity,' save that which binds me to the observance of the Constitution and Canons of the said 'General Council.'

"Thus it will appear that, in ordering the resumption of the Prayer for the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority, (upon the restoration of Civil Authority), I was anticipating the probable action of the 'General Council,' and exercising a very questionable power, but justifiable, as I thought, because done with the view of bringing

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the Diocese, as soon as possible, into entire harmony, in point of worship, with the Church generally. The condition of things is well understood by all well-informed Churchmen, but there may be many among you who need the information given. The above recited facts were not, it may be reasonably presumed, before the mind of the Military Authorities; and the present case stands, therefore, as one among many other illustrations of the injustice which may sometimes be done when parties are condemned, without trial, by a tribunal unacquainted with all the facts embraced, and with the complex bearing of these facts—to say nothing of the serious consequence likely to result from the assumption of jurisdiction in matters Ecclesiastical.

\* \* \*

“The issue raised is not one of loyalty. I have, in my Pastoral, counselled you to be loyal, and to take in good faith the Oath of Allegiance, and have set you the example by taking it myself. No one can fairly and properly charge disloyalty upon us who have taken the required test, and live daily in obedience to the law.

“Nor is the issue one of personal feeling towards him who fills the Presidential chair; for the Church would fain that every one might, through God’s grace and Holy Spirit, attain ‘unto everlasting joy and felicity.’ The Church uses the ‘Prayer for the President,’ not so much as a person, as an impersonation of the Civil Authority. \* \* \*

“The case stands thus: In the exercise of my Episcopal discretion, to which I am left by the ab-

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sence of any authoritative Church legislation, I have decided that 'the Prayer' is inapplicable to the existing condition of things. On the other hand, the Military Authorities issue 'Orders' that it shall be used at once, and that all the churches shall be closed until we accede to the demand. Thus the real issue before us is this: **SHALL THE SECULAR OR THE ECCLESIASTICAL POWER REGULATE THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH?**

"A higher than any earthly 'Order' comes in here to claim and control our obedience. The Principalities of this world can neither ordain the Clergy nor suspend them. In matters pertaining to His Kingdom, we must, in accordance with the teaching of the Apostle, 'Obey God rather than men.' Think for a moment: That an officer of the army undertakes to do in regard to the Church, by shutting up the sanctuaries of a whole Diocese, what the General Council of said Church would not dare to do!

"I counsel you, beloved Brethren of the Clergy and Laity, in the Name of God, and for the honor of His Church, to stand up for and to maintain, at whatever cost, the real issue now before us. Be assured, that man has no nobler mission than to defend, and, if need be, to suffer for, the right. Remember that the communications with God's mercy seat cannot be obstructed by any created power, and that the compensation of Divine Goodness will supply all our needs, through the riches of His Grace in Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Master."

This strong counsel was followed. Everywhere individual private prayer was made. Where it was

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possible, two or three gathered together in private houses in Christ's Name. Where soldiers were stationed the churches were closed, and when, upon the closing of St. John's Church, Montgomery, the congregation attempted to meet in Hamner Hall, they were dispersed by soldiers at the point of the bayonet. But where there were no soldiers the churches were opened and the usual services maintained, and never could the zeal of the military suppress the extemporized chapels that sprang up in private houses. Throughout the period personal freedom was not denied the Bishop, and he continued to confirm and to issue Pastorals, much to the indignation of the General who had suspended him from his functions, who now began to threaten imprisonment and possible death, but who dared not place him under arrest for an offence of which no law of the country, either civil or military, took cognizance.

The following extract from the Bishop's Journal for this period will show how he went on attending to his duties:

Sept. 28th. I issued a Pastoral to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese, on the occasion of the Churches being closed by military force.

Oct. 1st. (16th Sunday after Trinity.) Celebrated Divine Service, and preached in a private house.

Oct. 4th. Administered the Holy Eucharist to a sick person in private.

Oct. 8th. (17th Sunday after Trinity.) Preached in a private house in Mississippi City.

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Oct. 15th. (18th Sunday after Trinity.) Officiated in a private house.

Nov. 1st. (All Saints' Day.) Celebrated Divine Service in the Chapel of the "Church Home School"; preached and celebrated the Holy Communion.

Nov. 5th. (21st Sunday after Trinity.) Attended Divine Service at Hamner Hall, Montgomery, and, after a sermon by Bishop Green, I addressed the congregation.

Nov. 8th. I met the Bishops and Clerical and Lay Deputies of the Southern Dioceses in "General Council," and participated in the opening services. This and the two following days were spent in attendance upon the sittings of the "Council."

Nov. 12th. (22d Sunday after Trinity.) Preached in the Church of the Atonement, Augusta, Georgia.

Nov. 15th. Visited Hamner Hall, Montgomery, and witnessed with pleasure its growth and prosperity.

Nov. 19th. (23rd Sunday after Trinity.) Preached at my own residence.

Nov. 26th. (24th Sunday after Trinity.) Preached in the chapel of the "Church Home School."

Nov. 28th. United in Holy Matrimony ———  
——— and ———.

Dec. 3rd. (1st Sunday in Advent.) Preached at the residence of the Rev. Dr. Massey.

Dec. 10th. (2nd Sunday in Advent.) Attended Divine Service at Chapel of "Church Home School."

Dec. 23rd. Confirmed three persons in Trinity Church, Mobile.



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Dec. 24th. (4th Sunday in Advent.) Preached in the Chapel of the "Church Home School."

Dec. 25th. (Christmas Day.) Preached and celebrated the Holy Communion at last named place.

1866.—Jan. 1st. Summoned a Special Council of the Diocese.

Meanwhile the Bishop was attempting to change this condition of affairs, which was hampering the Church in her attempt to exercise her appointed functions. His first attempt was to secure from the General Convention of the Church in the United States a solemn protest against secular interference with ecclesiastical procedure. On the theory of that Church the Diocese of Alabama was one of its component parts, and, therefore, a fit object for help. The attempt that he made was not a memorial or appeal to the General Convention, which was then sitting in Philadelphia; Bishop Wilmer was the last man to put himself in the attitude of suppliant to that body. Neither was it a claim made on the House of Bishops. What he did was to direct a communication to three bishops personally who had given evidence of sympathy and largeness of vision—John Henry Hopkins, Thomas March Clark, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe—and who possessed such wisdom and influence that they could bring the whole subject matter before the House of Bishops in proper form. "As a dutiful son of the Church," he wrote to these brethren, "I will submit myself unquestionably to her decisions, and hear thankfully her admonitions, even when contrary to my private judgment. But, as I hope to receive mercy at the last

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day, I will not move in matters pertaining to the supremacy of the Church within her sphere, at the dictation of any secular power, civil or military." He explicitly disclaimed any solicitation of help for himself, trusting that he had sufficient of the grace of God to be able to maintain his own stand. He also granted that they would take issue with him in his directions concerning the use of the Prayer that had occasioned all the trouble. But he expressed the hope that the importance of the principle involved might unite in public assertion of the Church's supremacy those who differed as to his immediate application of the principle.

His hope was vain. Political feeling was too high for the members of the Convention to view the Bishop's action with dispassionate eye. The Convention was blind to the principle, and saw only the application. The House of Bishops, acting independently of the other House, did send a committee to Washington to procure, if possible, the favor of a revocation of the military interdict; but the committee was the smallest that could be appointed—a committee of one—and that Bishop, McIlvaine, of Ohio, who was supposed to have some influence at the White House because of the work he had done in England in turning popular sentiment against recognition of the Confederacy, failed to accomplish the purpose of his mission.

The Bishop's next step was to appeal to the Provisional Governor of the State, Lewis E. Parsons. General Order No. 38 had stated that there was a civil Governor, and the Bishop determined to see for

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himself how much authority the civil government possessed. In October he called on the Governor to demonstrate the truth of General Woods's assertion that "the military authority was subservient and subordinate to the civil authority," by freeing the Churchmen of Alabama from coercion for an offence not catalogued in any books of law. The Governor was compelled to acknowledge, in effect, that his hands were tied, and that he could do nothing in opposition to the military pronouncement, but in a very courteous note he promised to lay the whole affair before President Andrew Johnson. This note was shortly followed by another stating that he had fulfilled his promise, but that the President declined to consider the matter.

On November 27th the Bishop himself made direct appeal to the President, calling it to his attention that the Constitution, the supreme law, prohibits Congress from interfering with religious worship, and that Congress cannot allow her military arm to do what the Constitution expressly forbids to her civil arm; representing that he found himself, not having been accused as a lawbreaker, subjected to the operation of pains and penalties, and assailed with ignominious epithets; affirming that even upon the inadmissible supposition that he had been guilty of violating the laws of his own Church, the secular power was not competent to construe and enforce her rubrics and canons; and demanding in equity and constitutional law that the unauthorized General Order No. 38 be rescinded.

The President kept this appeal under advisement

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several weeks. Twice already he had declined to interfere in the matter, but the persistency with which the question returned for further consideration made him review it on its merits. On its merits there could be only one conclusion, and the President finally gave directions that the obnoxious order should be rescinded by the same authority that had promulgated it. Much against his will, and with pen that manifested much bitterness of soul, General Thomas withdrew the offensive General Order No. 38. In tone this Order was, because of conscious impotence, even more violent than the former.

### “HEADQUARTERS

“MILITARY DIVISION OF THE TENNESSEE.

“Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 22, 1865.

“GENERAL ORDERS, NO. 40.

“Armed resistance to the authority of the United States having been put down, the President, on the 29th of May last, issued his Proclamation of Amnesty, declaring that armed resistance having ceased in all quarters, he invited those lately in rebellion to reconstruct and restore civil authority, thus proclaiming the magnanimity of our Government towards all, no matter how criminal or how deserving of punishment.

“Alarmed at this imminent and impending peril to the cause in which he had embarked with all his heart and mind, and desiring to check, if possible, the spread of popular approbation and grateful appreciation of the magnanimous policy of the President in his efforts to bring the people of the United States back to their former friendly and national re-

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lations one with another, an individual, styling himself Bishop of Alabama, forgetting his mission to preach peace on earth and good will towards man, and being animated with the same spirit which through temptation beguiled the mother of men to the commission of the first sin—thereby entailing eternal toil and trouble on earth—issued, from behind the shield of his office, his manifesto of the 20th of June last to the Clergy of the Episcopal Church of Alabama, directing them to omit the usual and customary prayer for the President of the United States and all others in authority, until the troops of the United States had been removed from the limits of Alabama; cunningly justifying this treasonable course, by plausibly presenting to the minds of the people that, civil authority not yet having been restored in Alabama, there was no occasion for the use of said prayer, as such prayer was intended for the civil authority alone, and as the military was the only authority in Alabama it was manifestly improper to pray for the continuance of military rule.

“This man, in his position of teacher of religion, charity, and good fellowship with his brothers, whose paramount duty as such should have been characterized by frankness and freedom from all cunning, thus took advantage of the sanctity of his position to mislead the minds of those who naturally regarded him as a teacher in whom they could trust, and attempted to lead them back into the labyrinths of treason.

“For this covert and cunning act he was deprived of the privileges of citizenship, in so far as the right to officiate as a minister of the Gospel, because it was

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evident he could not be trusted to officiate and confine his teachings to matters of religion alone—in fact, that religious matters were but a secondary consideration in his mind, he having taken an early opportunity to subvert the Church to the justification and dissemination of his treasonable sentiments.

“As it is, however, manifest that so far from entertaining the same political views as Bishop Wilmer the people of Alabama are honestly endeavoring to restore the civil authority in that state, in conformity with the requirements of the Constitution of the United States, and to repudiate their acts of hostility during the past four years, and have accepted with a loyal and becoming spirit the magnanimous terms offered them by the President; therefore, the restrictions heretofore imposed upon the Episcopal clergy of Alabama are removed, and Bishop Wilmer is left to that remorse of conscience consequent to the exposure and failure of the diabolical schemes of designing and corrupt minds.

“By command of Major-General Thomas,

“WM. D. WHIPPLE,

“Assistant Adjutant-General.”

This order was not promulgated from Mobile, by General Woods, until January 10th, 1866. Three days later (January 13th), civil authority having been restored, Bishop Wilmer issued his final Pastoral dealing with the matter, calling on the clergy and laity to use the prayer for the President of the United States as it stood in the Book of Common Prayer.

The issuance of this Pastoral was neither a re-

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treat nor a compromise. The Bishop had never changed his position. On the occasion of the closing of the churches he had written: "Should the General Council, of which the Diocese of Alabama is a component part, order any prayer in place of that which has ceased of necessity, then, from that time forth, the ordering of the Council would be decisive as the supreme law of the Churches constituting said Council." The General Council had provided for such a prayer while the Alabama churches were closed, but this provision was not to have force of law in any diocese until approved by its Bishop or its Diocesan Council. It was the General Council's intention to leave Bishop Wilmer with free hand in settling his contention. So long as military dictation continued, so long did the Bishop withhold his approval of the prayer. So soon as secular pressure was withdrawn his approval was given freely and gladly.

The net result of secular interference was to delay the use in Alabama of the Prayer for the President of the United States just two months. What the Church refused to do of compulsion she did of her own free will. It was of infinitely greater importance to resist secular dictation than to pray for the President.

The Bishop was severely criticized through many years for his position in the affair recited in this chapter, but thirty years after, when time gave sufficient perspective, and the blindness of prejudice had largely disappeared, no one disputed the conclusion of the Historiographer of the American Church, the Rt.

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Rev. William Stevens Perry, Bishop of Iowa: "This action of the Bishop established for all time to come, in this land at least, the principle that in spiritualities the Church's rule is supreme."



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BISHOP AND THE GENERAL CONVENTION

When Wilmer was consecrated Bishop of Alabama in 1862, the dioceses consenting and the bishops consecrating had acted on the theory that the Confederate States were a nation separate and distinct from the United States, and that the Protestant Episcopal Church in the new nation was as independent of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States as the latter was of the Church of England.

The national Church in the Confederacy was administering its own affairs without advising with another national Church in the Union.

In the nature of things this theory was not held by the Church in the United States. In the General Convention of 1862, which met just after the second battle of Manassas and Antietam Creek, and while Grant was operating in Mississippi and Lincoln's preliminary proclamation of Emancipation was fresh in men's minds, the seceded states were regarded as actually in the Union even though in rebellion; a committee was very gravely appointed with instructions to investigate the cause for the absence of deputies from so many dioceses and to report to the General Convention of 1865; and the roll-call invariably began with Alabama, and included South Carolina and Virginia. The Convention thus logic-

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ally expressed its conviction of the indissolubility of the Union, and, therefore, except by schism, of the Church within the Union. It was the same conviction that led many clergymen, notably of Philadelphia, and not a few bishops to use rather intemperate language in public concerning those Churchmen who preferred to be governed by the logic of events rather than by that of closet philosophy, and who, knowing that the Confederate States were a *de facto* government, whether *de jure* or not, followed the ancient custom of legislative independence for that part of the Church of God within the limits of the *de facto* government. Wrath grew boundless and its expression was not trammelled by conventionalities of speech, when the Church in the Confederate States ignored the Church in the United States in all matters pertaining to the election and consecration of Bishop Wilmer. The words "traitors," "rebels," "schismatics" appeared in many diocesan journals, pastoral letters, and General Convention resolutions. Dr. Alexander H. Vinton, formerly a warm personal friend of Dr. Wilmer and a great admirer of his learning, even introduced a resolution, in the Convention of 1862, condemning the action of the Bishops who had consecrated him as "irregular, uncanonical, and schismatical," and proposing that his jurisdiction in Alabama be declared "void and of none effect." It is a little strange that the resolution, introduced a full six months after the consecration, proposed specifically to censure a Bishop, Davis of South Carolina, for doing something he never did!

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With the fall of the Confederacy and the approach of the General Convention of 1865 it became necessary for the Southern dioceses to determine what course they would pursue. Pronounced differences of opinion arose at once. The General Council had adjourned at Augusta, in 1862, to meet in Mobile in November, 1865. The General Convention was to meet a month earlier. Before the meeting of the General Convention it must be decided by the Southern bishops and their dioceses whether, without joint action but each on his own responsibility, they should singly return to the legislative body of the National Church, or whether the compact should be held sacred until every Southern diocese should be expressly relieved by the collective action of their representatives assembled in General Council.

Some claimed that the dissolution of the Confederacy carried with it of necessity the dissolution of the Southern Church, and rendered formal action unnecessary, perhaps impossible. Of such opinion were Bishop Johns of Virginia, Bishop Atkinson of North Carolina, and Bishop Lay of the Southwest.

But the majority of Southern bishops, led by Bishop Elliott of Georgia, Bishop Green of Mississippi, and Bishop Wilmer, contended that this view was entirely Erastian and un-Catholic; that with absolute independence of Church and State the strongest claim that can be set forward in behalf of any association of dioceses within geographical or political boundaries is the consideration of expediency, which every contracting party must determine for himself; and that a return to the former

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ante-bellum conditions was a matter whose expediency was yet to be determined. It was well-known that a self-assertive and aggressively patriotic party in the Church of the General Convention had avowed its intention "to keep the Southern Churchmen for awhile in the cold," and "to put the rebels upon stools of repentance." It was not known how strong this party was, but it was supposed to be strong enough to render intolerable the position of any Southern man who dared enter the lion's den. Seeking only to be prudent, disavowing all intention of prolonging a needless division in the Church, but boldly declaring that even if they should maintain a separate organization, because it might seem needful, they would be entirely free from schism and could with good conscience pray to be kept from that deadly error, the majority of Southern Bishops and dioceses agreed to maintain the organization of the General Council until the temper of the General Convention should make clear to them their future course. The consensus of opinion among the Southern bishops is accurately expressed in a letter in which Bishop Green gave his own opinion of the conditions to Bishop Wilmer. "I feel convinced," wrote Bishop Green, on August 9th, 1865, "that if any one or more of our Bishops shall attend the Convention he will receive as many insults on the one hand as kindnesses on the other. I would be glad to meet Stevens, and Odenheimer, and Hopkins, and Clark, because I know that they have warm hearts and unbloody hands."

The publication about this time of some corre-

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spondence between John Henry Hopkins, Bishop of Vermont and Presiding Bishop, and Bishop Wilmer had much to do with holding the Southern Bishops in line. Bishop Hopkins had, on August 1st, written a loving letter to the Southern Bishops, pleading with them not to prolong their separate organization which, being wilful and needless, must be schismatic. He had pointed out that in any case it was but "a matter of time" when this separation must disappear. And he had urged that what must be done at any rate, sooner or later, were better done at once.

To this circular letter Bishop Wilmer promptly sent a reply which clearly and forcibly set forth the Southern view of the question of reconciliation: The separation, he said, was not originally wilful and needless. Whether the continuance of it would be wilful and needless remained to be seen. As to doing a thing now because it must be done some time, he could only assert that in many matters the time of the action is everything. "There is nothing illegal," he went on, "in a second marriage, and it is generally a 'mere matter of time' with men when they shall marry again; but

"The funeral baked meats

Do coldly furnish forth the marriage tables."

It was unnatural to suppose that Southern grief could entirely and immediately turn from the past and sing Te Deums with the victors. Give us time, he said in effect, and do not require of us melody in our grief. Moreover, apart from sentiment, this stern fact must be faced: Every single man that

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would represent the Southern dioceses in the General Convention was still, according to the President's proclamation, "an unpardoned rebel and traitor," because every one of these men had obtained such judicial or military rank, or possessed such an amount of property, as excluded him from the general amnesty; and it was almost certain that the men who called these prospective deputies rebels and traitors would have the courage of their convictions, and, on the floor of the House of Deputies, question the propriety of allowing rebels and traitors to participate in the deliberations of a loyal Church.

This letter pleased Bishop Green of Mississippi so much that he adopted it as his own, declaring it a "noble letter," and well calculated to show our brethren "that there is but one manly and self-respecting course that we can pursue." It served another purpose also: It broke up a prospective meeting of the Southern Bishops, which Bishop Elliott had called to meet in Augusta on September 27th to confer on a mode of procedure, and to which he had with especial warmth bidden Wilmer, saying to him, "I can assure you it will not be your funeral." But again, in a letter to Bishop Wilmer, written September 1st, did Bishop Green interpret correctly the mind of the majority of the Southern Bishops. "Four days ago I wrote to Bishop Elliott, asking him if the meeting of our Bishops on the 27th could not be dispensed with. I really do not see any necessity for it. We are on the right track now, viz., the track of 'masterly inactivity.' Our 'strength is to sit still,' and wait the flow of events. And I can

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not well see any other conclusion that a consultation could bring us to. Do write to our good brother, and add your request to mine."

Bishop Hopkins would not yet despair of bringing the Southern Bishops to the approaching General Convention. On August 31st he made another appeal, this time directly to Bishop Wilmer, who had unwittingly become the mouthpiece of Southern sentiment. After reviewing the considerations of church polity and personal trials which Bishop Wilmer had urged in his letter, he said with utmost frankness:

"Your apprehensions of speeches and resolutions being offered, which would be exceedingly distasteful, are certainly reasonable, and there is a strong probability that the event will abundantly justify your anticipations. But so far is this from being an argument for your staying away, that it is, in my humble judgment, a powerful reason for your attendance. Your presence would be the best safeguard of the Convention from any unseemly exhibition of the kind, and your absence would give the largest encouragement to the temper of fanaticism. The great majority of both Houses, I feel sure, would put down, as disorderly, any expression that would give needless pain to their Southern brethren. And the Church would thus have a noble opportunity of exhibiting the contrast which has always (with only one exception) distinguished her Conventions from the assemblies of Presbyterian and Methodistical denominations.

"On this ground, independently of the mere duty,

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I acknowledge that I am extremely anxious for your attendance. The unbroken display of union in our Body, after the sore trials and sufferings of the past four years, would be the grandest spectacle which Christendom has seen since the days of the martyrs, and I am much mistaken if it would not raise a spirit of active aid and sympathy for the Churches in the South, which would be felt throughout the land, and repay, fourfold, the sacrifice of feeling.

"All this good result will be lost, I fear, by delaying the act of our reunion."

In similar vein did Bishop Horatio Potter, of New York, write to Bishop Elliott: "I cannot convey to you an adequate expression of my conviction that if the North can see hope of a cordial meeting of its action, there will be such an outpouring of warm and fraternal feeling and kind offices as the world hardly ever saw." In communicating this sentiment to Bishop Wilmer, Bishop Elliott added: "Both I and my Diocese prefer re-union, under the present condition of things, to separation, but as I said in my first letter to Lay and Atkinson and in my letters to Hopkins (of the Church Journal) and Potter, I expect and desire it be done thro' the action of the Convention on the one hand and the Council on the other; but I am not in authority in this matter, and other Bishops and Dioceses, who are yet to act—Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida,—may have decided otherwise, and thus rendered a meeting of our Council a farce. You have no idea how strong the tide is running in all the Dioceses north of us in favor of re-union, and should the Gen-



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eral Convention at Philadelphia act cordially, I sincerely believe we should not be able to gather a Council at Mobile; and such failure would be very mortifying. \* \* \*

"I do not see that we differ in any material point, except that I believe the feeling in the conservative portion of the Church at the North to be stronger than you suppose it."

In like spirit of amity the Domestic Missionary Society made the Southern Bishops offers of aid for their missionary clergy, and a committee of the Diocese of Pennsylvania gave them a cordial invitation to "free quarters and kind entertainment" in Philadelphia during the Convention.

Despite the insistent advances of Northern conservatives the Southern Bishops and Dioceses held by their compact, with the exception of the Bishop and Diocese of North Carolina and the Missionary Bishop of the Southwest. These two Bishops, Atkinson and Lay, in accordance with certain principles which they had set forth, and in firm belief that their very presence in Philadelphia would facilitate the healing of the breach in the Church, did not hesitate to attend the Convention in direct opposition to the wishes and advice of their brethren. Just before the opening service on October 4th they appeared in the throng about the open doors of St. Luke's Church, but no amount of persuasion could induce them to participate in the formal procession of the House of Bishops. Before the service was ended, however, they yielded to the repeated solicitation of friends, and clad in their episcopal vest-

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ments, entered the chancel and took their places with their brother Bishops. Applause could barely be restrained at their entrance. Upon the assembling of the House of Bishops for organization and the transaction of business the two Southern Bishops absented themselves, but sent a message asking upon what terms they were to be admitted. Answer was returned through the Bishop of New York that they must come without waiting for "terms," and that they could "trust all to the love and honor of their brethren." A most cordial, almost an official, reception was extended to the returning brethren as they took their seats in the House shortly after.

Of like spirit was the action which the House of Bishops took, at the earliest practicable moment, in the case of Bishop Wilmer. Their fifth message to the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies declared that "this House hereby accepts the Right Rev. Dr. Wilmer as Bishop of Alabama, and consents to his episcopate as such, provided, that the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies is willing to signify its concurrence in such acceptance and consent, and that hereafter the Bishop of Alabama shall transmit to the Presiding Bishop the promise of conformity comprised in the 'Office for the Consecration of a Bishop' in the Ordinal." With this formal message they communicated to the House, "informally," another resolution, whose tone indicated that a certain element in the House of Bishops had needed conciliation before it would agree to the recognition of Bishop Wilmer's jurisdiction. This was the informal resolution: "Resolved, That we hereby express to

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the Bishop of Alabama our fraternal regret at the issue of his late pastoral letter concerning the use of the Prayer for the President of the United States and assured confidence that no further occasion for such regrets will occur." But even with this fly in the ointment the Bishops had gone to the heart of the matter. The past was dead. Wilmer was already a Bishop. The case would not permit discipline, and cool judgment did not desire it. Canons had never been made with a view to the revolutionary conditions from which Church and Nation were emerging.

At first the action of the Bishops did not at all meet the approval of the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies. In this House were many clergymen, as able, in many cases, as the Bishops, but not yet sobered by the weight of responsibility that steadied the members of the upper House. Here were lawyers and publicists who had been instant for war, who had been patriotically urgent for the stamping out of the rebellion and the subjugation of the rebels, but who could not understand that the war was over. And here were demagogues who gladly sought the opportunity that so often tempts men to "play to the galleries." But also here were staunch and able lovers of the Union who, having fought for the preservation of an undivided country, were now intent on welding together the broken fragments; statesmen who, having proclaimed to the world the indissolubility of the Union, would demonstrate to the world the kindred nobility of spirit of former antagonists in forgetting the past and striving only for the

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future; Churchmen who, having seen the Body of Christ rent in twain by economic and political questions, would now pour in oil and wine and care for the bruised and bleeding fellow Christian.

These were the forces that contended over the resolution of the House of Bishops. For two days the debate was vigorous, and, at times, intemperate. At the outset Mr. Felix R. Brunot of Pennsylvania urged that the election of Bishop Wilmer be declared void until a majority of all bishops and dioceses in the United States had given consent thereto. Dr. Alexander H. Vinton of New York took the stand that all acts of the Southern Church should be considered null and void, and then be re-enacted by the General Convention, *nunc pro tunc*, to legalize them; insisting that the Southern men must, as an indispensable prerequisite of welcome, make a Prodigal Son confession, and that "if they come with any scintillation or declaration that their acts have been right, they meet with opposition at once, and union becomes an impossibility." The Rev. R. W. Oliver of Kansas contended that it would be time enough "to bow the knee before the persons seeking admission when they themselves desire to be the subject of our personal consideration and kindness." The Rev. Dr. Goodwin of Philadelphia strongly objected "to prostrating the Church and her Canons at the feet of the rebellious men who had made no concessions and requests for merciful treatment"; and on the final vote his was the one voice raised in objection to the adopting of the message of the House of Bishops—though, "for the sake of the record,"

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even he at last withdrew his formal objection.

It is remarkable, however, that of the prominent members of the House who participated in the debate, who afterwards rose to greater eminence in the Church, and who, therefore, may be justly deemed to have been true representatives of the mind of the Church, every one favored the recognition of Bishop Wilmer's jurisdiction and the acceptance of him as a member of the House of Bishops on the terms on which he himself had declared he would be glad to enter that House, namely, That he produce evidence of his valid consecration, and that he make the prescribed declaration of conformity to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Cummins of Illinois, afterwards Assistant Bishop of Kentucky, summed up the argument of his eloquent address by saying that if Wilmer were not recognized Alabama would be forced into a state of schism. "Wilmer is there as Bishop," he said. "Our opinion of his course may be what it may be, but he is Bishop of Alabama. He was consecrated according to Catholic usage. We cannot deny him a place in this Church if Alabama is one of the States of this Union." Kerfoot of Connecticut, made Bishop of Pittsburg three months later, affirmed boldly his belief that while Southern men had acted wrongly as citizens, "they were then right in what they did as Churchmen. Whether they were hasty or not is a minor question. They did as I would have done in the same position. They did what I believe nineteen-twentieths, probably ninety-nine-

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hundreths, of Churchmen would have done in the same conditions: They went to work as quickly as possible to put the Church of Jesus Christ in working order." As to Bishop Wilmer himself Dr. Kerfoot said: "It is known to the members of this Church, far and wide, how noble a man the Bishop of Alabama is. Unwise he most certainly is, and undutiful I think him, if a presbyter may so speak of a Bishop; but he is one of the noblest men that the Episcopal Church has ever had within her bounds. \* \* \* He is acting under a mistake, a great mistake, but we can do anything in the world but wrong for him." Clarkson of Illinois, made Bishop of Nebraska and Dakota just one month later, strove for such unanimity of action as was shown by the House of Bishops. Governor Hunt, Mr. Ruggles, and Mr. Hamilton Fish, all of New York, and Mr. Chambers of Maryland, added much to the growing conviction that only blind partisanship and reckless sectionalism would put any obstacle in the way of the free and unanimous return of the absent Southern brethren. Opposition was finally silenced, and the action of the House of Bishops was ratified by an all but unanimous vote. The proposition to sing the Gloria in Excelsis in thanksgiving for this outcome of the matter met with scant favor. As Bishop Wilmer had not many weeks before objected to singing a Te Deum with the Northern Church over Southern defeat, even so his critics objected to singing Gloria in Excelsis over the subordination of their sense of justice to the claims of Church unity.

Strangely enough it was more than two months

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before this action of the General Convention was officially communicated to the Bishop of Alabama. In the meantime the General Council of the Southern Dioceses had met in Augusta. The spirit of charity which had prevailed in the General Convention commended itself to the hearts of all present at the General Council, and once again did genial warmth loose the folds of self-protection which unfriendly Northern blasts would but have drawn tighter. The dissolution of the General Council was soon accomplished. Absolute freedom of action and liberty to withdraw from the Conciliar compact was accorded every diocese.

Only one obstacle now prevented Alabama from returning promptly to legislative union with the General Church, and that obstacle was the military duress described in the last chapter,—a condition of affairs which Bishop Elliott of Georgia felt so keenly that he declined to carry Georgia back to the bosom of the national Church until Alabama was free to go. But when the military interdict had been withdrawn Bishop Wilmer summoned a special Council to meet in Montgomery, on January 17th, 1866. He submitted his whole course of action throughout the many eventful months to the Council, and received from that body unstinted “approbation, admiration, and thanks for the firm, dignified, and Christian manner in which he had maintained the independence and dignity of the Church of this diocese.” And then, by formal resolution, the Church in Alabama resumed its old-time relation to the national Church.

Though he had now received everything that he

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had contended for, from both State and Church, the Bishop was not minded to receive meekly the unwarranted criticism which he thought the House of Bishops had passed upon him in adopting the resolution of regret which they had communicated "informally" to the lower House. His remarks upon this action, made to his diocesan Council in 1866, are so pungent, and so illustrative of both his power of analysis and his tenacity of purpose, that they deserve to be reproduced in full:

"It has been a matter of some doubt with me," he said, "as to the light in which this unusual coupling of 'regrets' with the assent to the jurisdiction of a bishop should be regarded. Inasmuch as the pastoral, in regard to certain positions in which these regrets were expressed, was issued by me whilst I was a foreign bishop and not bound in fact, as by 'declaration,' to conform to the Constitution and Canons of the Church in the United States, I cannot consider myself as properly amenable to the judgment of said Church; yet, notwithstanding these obvious considerations, there were some, both in and out of the General Convention, who regarded this expression of regret on the part of the House of Bishops in the light of a censure upon my official conduct. This construction cannot properly be given to their action, without the supposition of their having so far departed from ecclesiastical propriety as to pass a vote of censure upon the official action of a bishop who was not a member of their body, and who was not, therefore, properly amenable to their judgment in the premises. If the other theory be



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taken, that he was properly amenable, then the supposition involves an equally serious departure from ecclesiastical usage in passing judgment upon one who did not enjoy the privilege of a full hearing before sentence was passed. It would then reflect very seriously upon the action of a body so venerable as the House of Bishops to suppose that the expression of 'fraternal regrets' is to be viewed in the light of an official censure.

"It remains, therefore, to suppose that the House of Bishops felt it incumbent upon them to express a general regret at certain positions taken by myself lest they should appear to sanction certain views of the prayer for those in authority, which I had seen fit to present. Regarding the matter in this light, it would seem that, in restoring old relations, the expression of regrets is in order, and it may not be amiss in me to state that, after a careful review of the various pastorals put forth in the last unhappy years, there are very few in which we, who look at all that has transpired from a different standpoint, have not found occasion for regrets to which we can give no adequate expression. For my part, I can only say, and I say it merely in self-vindication, that I can recall no word that I have written to you, as your bishop, which now, in this moment of comparative quiet, I would obliterate from the record."

Immediately after adjournment of the special Council Bishop Wilmer set out for New York, where, on January 31st, 1866, in Trinity Chapel, he made the prescribed Declaration of Conformity, and united with the Presiding Bishop and other bishops

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and clergy present in the service of Holy Communion.

"Thus happily, as I think," wrote the Bishop a few months after all had been settled, "the Church in Alabama has been able, through God's grace and kind providence, to do her full duty, and to maintain her dignity and propriety; and, looking alone to the weal of the whole body of Christ, to pursue a steady and consistent course. Henceforth, guided by the same Spirit which has thus far led us and governed all our deliberations, let us more than ever strive for those things which concern the glory of God and the good of His Church.

"We are able to show the world that we are not a sect, much less a sectional sect; that the catholic spirit of the Southern dioceses has met with a like response in the catholic spirit of the Northern dioceses—'deep calling unto deep'—giving us confidence that henceforth, as ever before, no political differences shall prevail to break the bonds of catholic unity and of Heaven-born charity."

## CHAPTER IX

### GATHERING UP THE FRAGMENTS

Through all these years of disturbance the Bishop had been sojourning in Greensboro, a charming but quite inaccessible town in the interior of the State. Now that days of peace had come and it was possible to undertake Church work along normal lines it became necessary for him to make his home nearer some center of his work. Mobile commended itself to him, both for its local importance and for its accessibility to other portions of the diocese.

When his determination to remove to Mobile was made known a number of the local Churchmen bought a tract of half-cleared land on Spring Hill, seven miles from the city, and on it erected a small four-room house, to which they gave the Bishop a title in fee simple, not as diocesan but as individual property. The elevation, several hundred feet above the city, rendered it possible for the Bishop to keep his family in Alabama, and at home, throughout the year, instead of having to take them away every summer for fear of malaria. The neighborhood was of the best, but the immediate surroundings of scrub pines were most uninviting. The ground was cleared and shrubbery was set out. The spaces between the stilt-like pillars of the house were

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filled with lattice-work. Paint was freely used on the house, whitewash on the fences. It took time, work, and the personal labors of the Bishop to bring order and beauty out of the material at hand, but it was a homelike place in a few months. In a few years, when additional rooms were built it was the most attractive home on the Hill.

Access to this home was not as easy as it would have been in Mobile. Indeed, it meant the greater part of a day for one to go out. Mule cars carried the visitor to the foot of the hill, where oxen added their strength and toiled patiently up the tortuous ascent. The Bishop was often, from the very first, criticized for "hiding himself out in the country where it was hard for any one to find him." He had a characteristic reason to give: "It saves me a great deal of time that would otherwise be wasted. If any one really wishes to see me he will not hesitate to take the seven-mile car-ride. If he does not care to take the ride it is evident that his business was not deemed of importance." Whether this was an afterthought or a forethought it was the effect. When visitors stood the test of the journey, and many did stand it, the welcome was so cordial and the hospitality so unstinted that they were glad of the distance which compelled them to accept it to the utmost. Many a time did three or four unexpected guests sit around the large round table in the dining-room. In the study, adjoining the Bishop's living-room, scores of candidates for the ministry after painful effort received their passport to ordination; and, when adjournment was made to the dining-table, according

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to invariable rule, they were much refreshed by the symbolic veal and brotherly consideration that were served to them in equal parts. So attractive were the conditions that few left the cordial home circle willingly. On one occasion Dean Hoffman of the General Theological Seminary ran out from the city to spend a few hours between trains, and remained three days.

But much of this remained for the future. For the present the affairs of the Diocese demanded the most assiduous attention. Civil and ecclesiastical peace had been restored, but it was now necessary for both the Bishop and the Diocese to take stock and to use the resources at their command to the best advantage. Alabama had been the least troubled section of the South, and many clergymen and laymen had sought a measure of peace and quiet within its borders. At the close of the war most of these strangers went home. The departure of the clergy left a number of parishes vacant, and the departure of the laity impaired the finances of other parishes. In the single Conciliar year of 1865-6 the Bishop gave letters dismissory to more than one-third of his clergy, among them the future Bishop of Georgia, John W. Beckwith, Henry Sansom, A. Gordon Bakewell, and George F. Cushman.

If the clergymen were scarce money to offer those that remained was scarcer. Even the Bishop received no stipulated sum. He and most of his clergy lived on voluntary offerings, and he shared to the last cent with his youngest deacon. "Were I to tell you what God has enabled me to accomplish with

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limited means during the last eighteen months," he wrote John Stewart, on January 5th, 1867, "you would say, 'Verily, the Lord hath helped you.' \* \* \* I have fed and clothed forty persons during the last two years—orphans, widows, and such like. How we lived during the terrible transition, how we were enabled to bear up, God only knows."

While thus living from day to day as the very ravens which God feeds, the Bishop, not for his own sake but for the sake of the church, was pleading for systematic giving. By his own unremitting exertions in soliciting contributions, and by the kind co-operation of the Domestic Missionary Society of the General Church, he succeeded in the summer of 1866 in moving several clergymen into the Diocese; but for five months he could not get the congregations to put any money into the diocesan missionary treasury to pay these men. For eighteen months the amount contributed averaged only half a cent a week for each of the two thousand communicants in the Diocese. Ten cents a week would have given over ten thousand dollars a year. The embarrassment to which the Bishop was put in attempting to do the work to which he had been called was, he said, a reflection upon the zeal and even the honor of the Church. "It is a reproach to the head of the house when there is no meat in the Lord's house. It sets the members of the house a-begging. No government could retain honor if its officials were compelled to solicit alms on the streets, or to resort to fairs and tableaux for the purpose of raising the means of subsistence. It is in this way that the

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phrase, 'begging for the Church,' has acquired such universal and shameful currency amongst us. It is full time that there were an end of all such phraseology. We must understand that the Church of God is a government—a Kingdom—that her members are not her benefactors, but her children; that all that they have is God's and that of His own do they give Him."

It was when affairs were at this critical period that Northern dioceses and ecclesiastics sought to emphasize and strengthen the restored unity of the Church by proffering little financial courtesies to Southern bishops and dioceses. The wealthy Churchmen of the East helped the crippled missionary work of the South to its feet, with liberality unstinted until the misunderstandings of carpet-bag and reconstruction days brought greater alienation of spirit than had the war itself. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society sent Bishop Wilmer a check for three thousand dollars to help the work of a single year, and not long afterwards a layman of Louisville gave him one thousand dollars more. With this help the Bishop put two general missionaries in the field. Their work yielded such abundant fruit even from the beginning that in the following year he was about to add another worker, when, without warning, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society cut off twelve hundred dollars from the appropriation for Alabama in order to give it to Foreign Missions. The Diocese attempted in part to make up the deficiency, but lack of organization rendered the attempt largely abortive. The Bishop

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was affectionately encouraged to "go forward" in the propagation of the Church, but he was always left short of funds for the few outposts that he sought to maintain. There were no appointed advisers as to the disposition of either missionaries or funds. This trust showed perfect confidence in the Bishop. It worked well in the outgo, because it fixed on one man the whole responsibility for wise expenditure. But it worked ill in the income.

The Bishop worked along, however, as best he could, supplementing the labors of his missionaries with his own thorough visitations. He was welcomed twice wherever he went—once for his tried patriotism, and once for his unique personality. It may well be imagined that the plenty and prosperity of the opening days of the war were not now in evidence. One striking incident of the Episcopal visitations of those days lingered in the Bishop's memory till death.

He was making a visitation to one of his most remote congregations. As he drove up to the home of his hostess, he beheld a typical sight. In the porch was sitting the hostess' father, an aged man, the very image of hopelessness, the personification of despair. His son had perished in battle; his property had been swept away; and silent desolation marked his last years. The Bishop drew near and took his seat beside him, and tried to speak words of comfort. He made no response by word or look, but merely shook his head in utter wretchedness. Feeling at last that ordinary words were without effect, the Bishop asked:



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"What is that you have in your hand?"

"It is a pruning knife," he replied.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"My daughter wants me to prune her grape vines. They are growing wild."

"What!" exclaimed the Bishop. "Are you going to cut off these boughs, which look so beautiful?"

"Oh, yes," was the response. "I cut them very close, and for this reason your heart bleeds."

"Don't they bleed? If those vines had a voice and should ask you why you despoil them of all their beauty, what would you say?"

"I would tell them that I planted them for fruit, and not for leaves only. If you want good fruit you have to cut very close lest the strength of the vine should all run to leaves."

"Now, my friend," said the Bishop, leaning forward, "Don't you see how it is with you? All the years of your long life you have run to nothing but leaves. In your childhood you were grafted upon the vine. Fourscore years grafted, and no fruit! Now, the Father, who is the Husbandman, doesn't wish to see you coming to the Harvest bearing nothing but leaves. Therefore he has pruned you very close and for this reason your heart bleeds."

The expression of the eye changed in a flash, but otherwise there seemed to be no effect from the conversation. Next year the Bishop visited the same congregation, and called for the candidates for Confirmation to come forward. Only the old man came up. As he knelt he laid his head upon the chancel rail. When the hands of the Bishop were raised

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from his head he gently took one of them in his own, and whispered softly,

"A little fruit, I hope, Bishop."

Not only the laws of the vegetable kingdom, but also those of the political served him as vehicle for conveying spiritual truth. He was travelling for several hours with one who had occupied with distinction the highest judicial positions under first the Federal Government and then the Confederate. This man belonged, consequently, to that class which, under the Proclamation of Amnesty, was required to obtain an individual pardon before citizenship could be restored and professional practice resumed. He had been brought, by the trials and vicissitudes of the recent perilous times, to ponder the deep things of life. In the enforced quietude of the prison he had studied the Prayer Book and the "Office for the Visitation of Prisoners"—which he, though a great reader, had then seen for the first time,—and he had been brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

Finding that his friend was fixed in his resolve to enter upon the Christian life, the Bishop said,

"Judge, of course you have been baptized?"

"Well, no," the judge answered; "I am a man not much given to forms; I go pretty much for the substance of things."

"And you a lawyer, Judge? Of all men who should appreciate the power and necessity of forms, lawyers should be the foremost. Tell me, Judge, where have you been lately?" The Bishop asked this, knowing the occasion of the present journey.

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"I am just from Washington," he said.

"Why did you go to Washington?" inquired the Bishop.

"I went to obtain my pardon from the President. You know that, under his proclamation, one who has occupied my position is required to obtain pardon in this way."

"That is all right, Judge," the Bishop said. "One must have citizenship and be at liberty to work in his calling. But how about that other proclamation from the Lord of the Kingdom? Is it less clear and authoritative than that which you have just recognized—'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God'?"

Nothing further was needed. The Judge showed his appreciation of the point. In the course of a few weeks he was baptized and confirmed. For many years he represented his Diocese in the General Convention.

It was now a little easier, perhaps, to get from place to place than in the last days of Bishop Cobbs, but there were more places to go to and the fatigue involved was greater in the sum total. Butler and Pushmataha required a combination of steamboat and spring wagon. Gainesville and Forkland involved buckboards and fords, and occasionally a spilling into a treacherous creek. Bon Secour was a trip of several days down Mobile Bay and back, with an unknown number of days on the way going or coming or at the destination, the inevitable sailboat being at the mercy of wind and tide, and the hapless passenger camping almost continuously on

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the deck. The Bishop would often come back from Bon Secour with his eyes so inflamed by the glare from water and from sand that he could scarcely use them for days. The nearest approach to ice application that he could find down the Bay was cold oysters, which he applied to relieve the inflammation.

On some of the newer railroads then beginning to stretch out from the larger towns the discomfort and the danger were quite as great as those of older methods of travel. On one of these roads, near Selma, the grading was new, the ties were green, and the rails were rough. A fleet footman could have caught up with the train. But it ran off the track. The coach occupied by the Bishop upset and tumbled down the steep embankment. The Bishop broke a window of the car and crawled out all covered with dust. As he did so, one of his fellow-passengers, after spitting a little dust out of his mouth, exclaimed, "I tell you we came pretty nigh going to hell that time, didn't we?" "Speak for yourself, sir," the Bishop replied, "I didn't get my ticket to that place."

Though the anxieties of diocesan administration under such circumstances were abnormally great, and though his susceptibility to atmospheric conditions led him to write thus early, "The climate begins to tell upon me," he was neither too absorbed nor too ill to accept outside responsibilities in the pulpit and to write strong and eloquent sermons. The death of Bishop Elliott in December, 1866, was a great grief to him, and he accepted the two invita-

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tions that came to him soon, to preach the memorial sermon and to perform Episcopal duties for the bereaved Diocese until another Bishop should be consecrated.

The Elliott Memorial Sermon was preached on January 27th, 1867, in Christ Church, Savannah, in the morning, and by special request was repeated the next day in St. John's Church, and two weeks later in Christ Church, Mobile. It was the most noteworthy sermon that Bishop Wilmer had ever, up to this time, delivered. It dealt fearlessly and plainly, and yet in good spirit, with the things which had been moving men's hearts. It was a son's panegyric upon his father, and being this it revealed the son's nature not less than the father's. Disclaiming any assertion of perfection in Bishop Elliott he spoke these burning words:

"Bishops are fashioned out of men. Earthen vessels are they, to whom a heavenly treasure is entrusted. More than human would the Southern bishops have been, if under that tremendous pressure of feeling, the recollection of which, even now at times, causes a tightening of the chest, their thoughts had not sometimes overflowed in strong and resistless expression. The good Bishop was not more than human. Indeed, it was his humanness that constituted his peculiar charm, and attracted to him all our hearts.

"There is something less than human, which will never offend after this manner. There is a cold-blooded indifference, which cannot be roused to holy indignation, and it may pass for great moderation.

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There is a time-serving timidity which shrinks from the consequences of a deed of daring, and it may pass for great prudence. There is a calculating policy which gauges all questions by the standard of profit and loss, and it will pass for great sagacity. Men of this stamp can go through the fire unharmed, because there is no material in them to be kindled. These are the less than human.

“Bishop Elliott was not a man of timid and calculating nature. He had been reared in the school of honor, whose teachings, when sublimated by the grace of God, impel men to dare all consequences in the assertion and maintenance of the right. He had not been his father’s son, he had been recreant to his whole race, if, in a question of sentiment and principle, he had paused to calculate the consequences by any standard of earthly profit.

“When men such as these fall into error, it is after their own manner, and in the line of their own nature. They are incapable of meanness, cowardice, and treachery; but when their indignation is aroused, they are prone to overflow the bounds of moderation. Errors of this kind are wont to be found in connection with generous and impassioned temperaments. These are the infirmities which God knoweth, and, as a Father, pitieth; and, blessed be His Holy Name, when repented of, are, with sins of a deeper dye, washed away in the most precious blood of Christ, and remembered no more forever.”

In the autumn of 1867 the first Lambeth Conference, composed of bishops of the Anglican Communion the world over, met in London at the invi-

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tation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The active personal interest of Mr. Henry A. Schroeder of Mobile, and of Mr. Benjamin Micou of Tallassee, enabled Bishop Wilmer to attend this Conference and to spend several months in England. His reputation had gone before him and he found many friends among the clergy and laity. English sympathy had been largely with the Confederacy and he was known as the only Confederate Bishop. His contest with the military authorities was well known and his attitude fully approved of by English Churchmen. The entire visit occupied a little more than four months, and for a portion of this time the Bishop was a guest of Lady Monckton. He preached in some of the largest churches in England, and made addresses in behalf of the venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in St. Michael's Church, Bristol, and St. Paul's Church, Clifton, and wherever he was heard and known his reputation was increased. Among those who met him was Mr. Davidson, then a promising young clergyman, now the Archbishop of Canterbury, who stayed in the same house with him for a time; and thirty-eight years afterwards when the Archbishop came to America, he still remembered him with enthusiasm.

One of the most interesting incidents of his visit because it illustrated the power he had over men occurred at Wolverhampton. A strike of the shoemakers had occurred, and a large meeting was arranged in the hope of adjusting the differences between the employers and the strikers. Several notable people were invited to address the strikers,

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among them the American Bishop, who, it was supposed, knew the minds of workingmen as he came from a workingman's country, and to whom English workingmen would be sure to listen. Speech after speech was made to the strikers, but they remained sullen and intractable. When Wilmer's turn came he began by telling them the story of "Uncle Manuel," the old shoemaker on a plantation in Virginia, who was noted for his careful workmanship, as well as for his honesty and patience. Wilmer described the whole process of shoemaking, with which the strikers were surprised to find he was perfectly familiar, and skillfully carried them along with him into a rational discussion of the mutual relations which ought to exist between employers and employed. The meeting broke up with the honors for Wilmer, and a few days afterwards the strikers returned to work, impelled to do so by the American bishop's arguments.

"The most beautiful service I attended in the mother country," he wrote, "was a Harvest Home celebration at Clifton-on-the-Downs. All the first fruits of the earth were brought into the sanctuary, and blessed with praise and offering. Can we doubt that such services are acceptable to Him who crowns the year with His goodness? The heart filled with gratitude to God, and expressing itself outwardly in offerings to His poor—does it not approach the Sacramental and Eucharistic worship? I cannot comprehend the views of some—happily not among ourselves—who speak of such service in terms of ribaldry and scorn; who can see nothing more in



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such a service than exhibitions of flowers and fruits."

Among the honors paid him on this visit was the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Cambridge. The hood was placed upon him in due and ancient form, but he never wore it after he came back home. The degree itself he prized highly.

As well-bred gentlemen the English hosts of the American Bishops often brought into the conversation complimentary references to the men and the incidents especially prominent in American history, but it happened to them once or twice that their remarks were not well placed. The heroism of the Pilgrim Fathers was, of course, a favorite theme—and a safe one. But it was made to do service once too often. After hearing about that incident more times than he was willing to count up, Bishop Wilmer finally broke in on the last offender with the impatient remark:

"I am so tired of hearing about the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on Plymouth Rock that I heartily wish Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers."

While the guest of the Bishop of London he was compelled to hear a great deal about "the late war," slavery, and the like, and for the sake of peace with the Northern bishops who were his fellow-guests he often kept silence, and restrained his lips even from what he thought good words. On one occasion, however, he exploded. The occasion was this:

After a particularly trying conversation, which the host had vainly sought to turn, Bishop Tait called

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attention to an excellent portrait of George Washington, and said to Bishop Wilmer,

"Like all true sons of Virginia you are an admirer of George Washington?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so, to some extent," responded the Bishop. "We think he was a well-meaning old gentleman."

The slighting tone in which he spoke aroused the general attention of the other bishops, who ceased their conversation, and turned to listen to what he would say next. This was just what Bishop Wilmer wanted.

"What do you mean by speaking of the immortal Washington in that way?" asked Bishop Tait. "I thought that you held Washington in reverence as a patriot and soldier."

"He was well-meaning enough," iterated Bishop Wilmer, "but he did Virginia more harm than any other man that ever lived."

"Why, how is that?" asked the host with curiosity.

"Because he won the fight against England," responded Bishop Wilmer. "If it had not been for George Washington we would to-day be the loyal subjects of a most gracious, virtuous, and Christian queen. But as it is we are the most unwilling subjects of a drunken Tennessee tailor."

The anecdote illustrates a certain ferociousness of wit which Bishop Wilmer was unable at times to restrain. On this occasion he was smarting under certain chilly behavior towards himself on the part of some of the Bishop of London's Northern guests, and his recent encounter with "the drunken Ten-

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nessee tailor" was fresh in his memory. The broadside which he let loose was not, it is perhaps unnecessary to say, intended to proclaim a disparaging opinion of George Washington, for whose character and services he, of course, entertained an abiding admiration, but simply to demolish the Northern bishops. It had that effect, and Wilmer, in relating the incident afterwards, said they "disappeared from the room so fast that their coat tails stood out straight."

In somewhat the same spirit he treated a certain prominent Churchman in London, who had become an intemperate advocate of what he called "temperance." Wilmer insisted that there should be moderation in all things, but that the position held by fanatical temperance advocates was illogical and impracticable. After dining with this gentleman Wilmer was requested to look at the picture of the stomach of a drunkard. The Bishop looked at it with interest and then asked his host if he did not have a picture of the stomach of a water drinker. His host said he had not. "That is too bad," said Wilmer, "for I feel sure you would find it full of tadpoles!"

The Bishop travelled in company with his cousin, Joseph Pere Bell Wilmer, Bishop of Louisiana, a saintly man, whom he revered. This companionship was to him the most delightful feature of the entire journey. "Dick" and "Joe," as they called each other, were inseparable from start to finish, and the wit of the former and the saintly conversation of the latter were ideal foils each of the other. The cousins stood each other in good stead, Ala-

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bama bearing the brunt when Louisiana, in a fit of absent-mindedness, burnt his letter of credit, and Louisiana accelerating the passage of the two through the custom-house by his noble face, his distinguished manners and his courteous bearing. On the return trip they encountered a severe storm, which was at its height at midnight. Going to their state-room about this time, the Bishop of Alabama found the Bishop of Louisiana lying down, and reading the service for the Burial of the Dead, while the storm raged and the ship pitched. He made no comment at the time, but next day he remarked to his cousin:

“Joe, you are very nearly a perfect Churchman. You have been baptized, and catechized, and confirmed, and ordained, and consecrated, and buried. Only one thing more is needed: Be churchied, and you will be perfected!”

Of the disputes in this first Lambeth Conference over the attempt made by many bishops, led by John Henry Hopkins of Vermont, to place on record a formal condemnation of Bishop Colenso of Natal for heretical views Bishop Wilmer never wrote one word. He did, however, express his disappointment that the Conference did not in something more than general and indefinite phraseology affirm its wish to bring about Christian Unity by offering to do away with any removable obstacle to Christian unity that might be found in the Anglican Communion. “It was solely with a view of giving my voice in favor of such resolution that I was moved to attend the Conference,” he said to his diocesan Council, “and I shall

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ever remember with pleasure that the only word which I uttered in that assembly was in favor of such a formal declaration as I have referred to."

It was Bishop Wilmer's rare privilege this year and the year after to receive as applicants for Holy Orders two young men who subsequently became bishops, respectively, of Western Texas and Michigan—R. W. B. Elliott and Samuel Smith Harris. The former was a son of Bishop Stephen Elliott, and was confirmed by Bishop Wilmer in Savannah the day he preached the Memorial Sermon. Young Elliott was then twenty-seven years old, and his letter to Bishop Wilmer, in which he made known to the Bishop his desire to study for Orders, shows a rare combination of zeal and humility. "I am not worthy, but here am I; send me," is the tone of the whole epistle. He did not ask for immediate enrollment as a postulant. "I am too young and inexperienced a character to be certain of my strength," he said to Bishop Wilmer; "I wish time to analyze my motives in taking the step. I do not wish hurriedly to commit myself to it. At the same time I should like to read with a view to this end, so that should I after a while be deemed worthy to labour in the Great Harvest, where the laborers are so few, the present time shall not have been wasted." He was made deacon in the next year, and in 1874 Bishop Wilmer assisted at his consecration as Bishop.

The other young man approached the Bishop about the time Elliott was made deacon. S. S. Harris had been a successful lawyer for ten years when, in 1868, he made a visit to Mobile to see the Bishop.

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The two men had never met. The Bishop happened to be on the car going home, and he afterwards related that he was so impressed with the bearing and facial expression of the unknown young man that he thought within himself, "Ah, that is the sort of man we want for the Lord's work." Great was his thankfulness when, later in the day, this same desirable person appeared at Spring Hill and made known his wish to enter the Ministry. He was made deacon in February, 1869, and priest on June 30th, of the same year. Immediately after his ordination as priest he accepted a call to Columbus, Georgia, thence went to Trinity Church, New Orleans, and after declining the bishopric of Quincy in 1878 was, on September 17th, 1879, consecrated Bishop of Michigan, Bishop Wilmer presiding. Bishop Harris was the first native Alabamian ever made Bishop.

In 1867 the Bishop had removed the Church Home for Orphans from Tuscaloosa to Mobile in order to have it under his immediate management, and, incidentally, to keep it prominently before the eyes of more persons as a worthy object of their benefactions. The Home was his own child; it continued to the end to be his personal responsibility; and at no time was it under the control of any committee from the Council. The property in Tuscaloosa, which had cost him thirty thousand dollars in Confederate money, was sold for two thousand dollars in gold. When all debts were paid fifteen hundred dollars remained. With this the orphans were brought down to Mobile and settled in a two-room house given by St. John's parish. Of the

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three deaconesses who had been set apart in Tuska-loosa on December 20th, 1864, two had for the last two years been conducting a girls' school at Spring Hill, hoping thus to make something clear for the support of the orphans, and the orphans had been in the immediate care of the other deaconess and the probationers; but the school, Bishop Wilmer's first and last venture in the educational line, was now rented out, and the work of the Sisterhood was henceforth concentrated on the Home.

From the beginning the Home was managed on the broadest humanitarian lines and the safest financial. Creed, denomination, and nationality were ignored as criteria of admissibility. It was enough that the orphan was an orphan. The only conditions laid down by the Bishop were: Both parents must be dead and the child must be destitute.

On such a basis the venture was an expression of faith in God and confidence in humanity. Neither the faith nor the confidence was misplaced. They were put to the test in the earliest days, the trial was met successfully, and men have continued the reward uninterruptedly and in overflowing measure to the present day. The immediate incident, upon which the Bishop was wont to dwell was this: A butcher, not a Churchman, died and left three motherless children, for whom there were no relatives to provide. As soon as the Bishop heard the particulars he directed that the children be brought to the Home, and there be kept and nurtured till they should be able to earn their own living. This action came to the ears of the butchers, who felt that such

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a kindness to one of their number was a kindness to all. They manifested their appreciation in a manner possibly without parallel. In the many years that have passed they have supplied the Home with all the fresh meat that it uses, and have never for a day wavered in their generosity. Money is invariably offered; it is invariably refused.

The breadth of spirit thus manifested in the conduct of the Home commended the venture to the entire city and had everything to do with its subsequent success. On every Shrove Tuesday the Churchwomen of the three parishes of Christ Church, Trinity, and St. John's united in a Bazaar, which turned into the treasury about two thousand dollars annually. Once in every year the train-men gave a portion of the proceeds of their excursion to Biloxi, amounting to several hundred dollars. At least once the Bishop went North to raise some money.

On this visit a dinner was given him in New York. After the coffee and when the conversation had become quite general, some old friends asked him if some pretty hard things had not been said in the South about the North. Of course he had to reply in the affirmative. When urged to give the worst specimen that he could recall he said that the worst was probably one that his gallant but reckless friend, Major Harry Maury, had used, and that was known locally as the "Lazarus conundrum." When urged to repeat it he declined. "It is too hard on you," he said; and changed the subject. But the curiosity of the others was now excited, and they would not



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be satisfied without hearing the worst thing the South had said about the North. Still the Bishop declined, and still they requested, until at last he said, "Well, if you will have it so, I will tell you the conundrum, but I will not tell you the answer. You must puzzle it out for yourselves. What Maury asked was, 'Why was the South like Lazarus?'"

Some clever but incorrect answers were given, and finally all "gave it up" and demanded the answer. This Bishop Wilmer declined to give, citing the agreement that he was only to propound the conundrum. "The answer is too hard on you," he protested, "and you would not thank me for telling you."

But the demand was more urgent than ever, and at length the Bishop said: "All right, then. I warned you that it was pretty hard, but if you can stand it I suppose I can. Maury's answer to the conundrum, 'Why was the South like Lazarus?' was: 'Because she was licked by dogs!'"

For a moment there was the silence of consternation, all staring at the speaker, some pushing their chairs back from the table. But the revulsion came almost immediately. Laughter prevailed, and cries of 'Capital!' 'Hard, but good!' and the like arose. But one red-faced old gentleman, sitting just across from the Bishop, glared at him in speechless rage, and then blurted out,

"Well, sir, if you at the South consider us dogs, why do you come up here to beg for money?"

In a flash the Bishop answered, "Because, sir, in the South we believe in the proverb that the hair of the dog is good for the bite."

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The table rattled with the applause and laughter, but the red-faced old gentleman did not join in. Next morning, however, the Bishop received from the disgruntled one a check for one thousand dollars for the orphanage.

The deaconesses economized at every point. The economy that was practised was of such real nature and was assisted by such real generosity that all the expenses of the institution for the year 1871 were less than thirty dollars for each inmate, being at the rate of less than ten cents a day. With the amount saved by rigid economy the Bishop made investments. At first he lent the money on individual notes. When the amount at his disposal grew larger he lent it to private banking houses. When the solvency of these banks grew doubtful he invested it in Mobile County bonds. When the principal reached six thousand dollars he invested it in Alabama state bonds, preferring security to large income. The first bonds thus bought were, in consequence of carpet-bag misrule, at a great discount, selling at from one-half to three-fourths of their face value, and bearing from two to seven per cent. On the "Class A" bonds, which the Bishop regarded with special favor, interest increased regularly as they approached maturity, and his investment in these paid, in some cases, ten per cent. on the amount invested. It was not long before all bonds were selling at par, and after 1887 every bond purchased was bought at a premium.

In controlling this institution the Bishop found scope for the exercise of his executive ability, and

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this ability he manifested to a wonderful extent. His business sagacity was so great that he never made a bad investment in the thirty-three years of his management of its finances, and when he died he had large holdings of real-estate for the Home in Mobile and a well secured endowment of forty thousand dollars.

The Church Home for Orphans was the only institution that Bishop Wilmer set on its feet, but he ever retained others in view. He looked confidently forward to the day when there would be a Church Infirmary, a Church Home for Widows, and a Retreat for the Abandoned; and he expressed the conviction that not until every needful agency of this kind had been established could the Church in any Diocese be assured that she was fully representing her Divine Head, and carrying out the intent of Christ's mission on earth. The chief obstacle to further development along these lines was held by the Bishop to be, not money, but lack of women who would consecrate their lives to the work.

## CHAPTER X

### SOME SERMONS AND SERMON METHODS

Bishop Wilmer preached another great sermon in St. John's Church, Savannah, on Thursday, April 2nd, 1868, the occasion being the consecration of his former presbyter, John W. Beckwith, as Bishop of Georgia. The service itself was notable in that it was a marked advance in elaborateness and dignity over any similar service ever before held in the Southern states. Bishop Young of Florida had interested himself personally for weeks ahead in training the choir. The *Sursum Corda*, the *Tersanctus*, and the *Gloria in Excelsis*, and the 93rd Hymn to the tune *Mear*, were sung by the choirs and people together. At 2 p. m., after the Prayer for the Church Militant, the larger part of the congregation withdrew, and at 3 p. m. the service concluded. It was the first choral service ever held on occasion of a consecration in the Southern states. The sermon by Bishop Wilmer was one hour and forty minutes long, but the souvenir account of the service, which was printed together with the sermon by request of the vestry of St. John's, declares that "under the fine voice, eloquent tones, and vigorous delivery of the preacher, the congregation sat unwearied."

The sermon was as unlike the Elliott Memorial

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sermon delivered the year before in the same church as could be well imagined. That sermon dealt purely with a person, this with an organization. That was political, this ecclesiastical. That appealed to the emotions, this to the intellect. The topic was, "The Church of the Living God—the Stay of the Truth and the Home of the Faithful." It was an eloquent presentation of primitive truth and apostolic order, and a remarkably simple and forcible declaration and defence of the Church's comprehensiveness. After showing that the Church gathers from all quarters by the accession of earnest and catholic minds and loses at all points by the departure of those who are unable to take in her catholic spirit, he illustrated this general statement by the specific cases of Calvinists, Methodists, and extreme Tractarians, and maintained his thesis in the following passages, which are quoted in full:

"The solution of the difficulty—for it does create difficulties in some candid minds—is to be found in the catholic and comprehensive character of this Church, which suits all men of moderation, and does not quite satisfy any extreme temperament. Her Articles have a savor of Election, and they could not fully bring out the Scriptures without it; but they do not go far enough in the way of definition to satisfy the Calvinist. A comparison of the Thirty-nine Articles would show this. She has too much of form to please the great mass of American minds, but not enough to satisfy the Italian mind; sufficient to ensure the doing of all things 'decently and in order,' but not enough to satisfy the superstitious element.

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In a word, this Church is all-sided, touching the Christian world at every point. Persons of extreme opinions fly off at tangents to her sphere, and, gathering themselves by elective affinity with others like-minded, form parts of bodies with more or less of eccentricity of orbit.

“And should it be urged as a defect of this Church that so many and diverse movements have taken place within and away from her communion, let it never be forgotten that all the phases of religious thought, and all the various religious organizations of ancient times, were evolved, at one time or another, from the bosom of the Primitive Apostolic Church. Thus it will appear that the phenomena which are pointed at as symptoms of defect and disease are most pregnant proofs of the catholicity, or wholeness of this branch of Christ’s Church. For it must be considered that none but a body truly catholic could be susceptible of such diverse movements; for the same reason that it is only the perfect and entire human body that is susceptible of all kinds of disease. For errors in doctrine are not so much pure inventions as perversions of some original truth. If the truth is not held, there is no perversion of it possible. For example: If the doctrine of the Intermediate State were not held, there would be no room for the doctrine of Purgatory. If there were no reverence for the Blessed Virgin, there could be no room for Mariolatry. If there were no recognition of the departed faithful in the ‘Communion of Saints,’ there could be no room for their invocation. If the Sacraments were not retained,

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there could be no development of Sacramentarianism. If there were no Ministry, there could be no Priestcraft. If there were no Ritual, there could be no Ritualism. If the Unity of the Godhead were not asserted, there could be no Unitarianism. If the Holy Evangel were not taught, there could be no Evangelicalism. If Reason had no scope, there could be no Rationalism. In a word, if there were no life, there could be no disease, and no death.

“Now, if men were perfect, and if the truths of religion were perceived absolutely it might be possible to conceive of truth being held without the danger of exaggerating and perverting it. But religious truth is not absolutely perceived, as is mathematical truth, and men, even the best men, are most imperfect and have proclivities to error, some in one direction and some in another. Consequently, any collection of men, in any condition of vigorous life, will manifest all tendencies, and manifest them variously in proportion to the largeness and all-sidedness of the system which holds them together. The very catholicity of the body necessitates these phenomena. The attempt to avoid this possibility, as is done when men separate themselves from their brethren and address themselves to the maintenance and propagation of a single class of ideas, may, perhaps, lessen this liability; but it is at the cost of mutilation. It is as if the lung should be torn away in order to guard against pneumonia; it is as if life should be destroyed in order to render disease impossible.”

Affirming that while this Church maintains most firmly the Catholic faith she yet guarantees most

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fully individual liberty of thought, and that though she assures the integrity and perpetuity of the former she does not restrict the freedom and progress of the latter, he said: "The importance of securing these two points, and of securing them in conjunction, cannot easily be exaggerated. \* \* \* It is possible to conceive of a system which shall so subject the understanding, and reduce it to an unenquiring and unintelligent reception of dogma, and of all teaching as dogma, as that there shall be no variableness nor shadow of difference among its adherents. I say it is possible to conceive of such a condition of things, but not in connection with life and progress,—constituted as we find man to be. No branch of the Church of Christ affords any such scene. The Church of Rome—with all her boasted unity, and centre of alleged infallibility—presents no such spectacle. She has her various schools of thought, and of organization, which must ever be found among living and thinking men. Perhaps in some form of Heathenism, out of which all life is departed, you may find a dead monotony of unquestioning acquiescence; but its surface is thus unruffled because there is no living thing that moves in its depths. It is the unquestioning silence of the grave.

\* \* \*

"Ruling out all else, in the matter of doctrine, as not entering into the terms of communion, she upholds without change the fundamental faith. Side by side at her altars stand the Calvinist and the Arminian, the High and the Low Churchman. If the particular views of either party were pressed and



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admitted to the exclusion of others, there would be at once the starting point of new denominational bodies in our midst. There are a few overheated minds who would rejoice in this solution of existing differences. Thank God, they constitute a feeble, though excited, minority in the Church.

“The argument which is urged against the Church because of her alleged indefiniteness of teaching, and her seeming indifference upon many points of controversy, is precisely the same argument which is urged by the infidel against Holy Scriptures themselves. All Churchmen, it is urged, appeal to the Prayer Book in support of their particular views. True; and all Christians appeal to the Holy Scriptures in support of their respective tenets. But the Scriptures cannot be narrowed down to the dimensions of a school; neither can the teachings of the Prayer Book, which faithfully reflect all the truths of Holy Scripture in all their breadth and fullness, be narrowed down to the dimensions of any party in the Church.”

This sermon was not written, as a whole, for the occasion on which it was preached. It comprised not simply the thoughts but the exact words, and occasionally paragraphs, of earlier sermons. This was an illustration of a fixed habit of the Bishop. He never hesitated, when the line of thought in one sermon followed to any extent the line of thought in another of his own sermons, to use over and over again the common thought in the original or in a slightly modified form. Many of the earlier pages of this sermon are a transcript of another sermon

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which he had been preaching through Alabama, and from which the changes were only such minor ones as are inevitable in transcribing one's own writings; as, for example, the substitution of "many" for "some," of "these fundamental truths of the Christian faith" for "the great facts of Christianity," of "her embrace" for "her ample fold," and such like. After its delivery in Savannah, it was still further modified and was later published in a large edition as the initial number of a series of tracts published by the short-lived Church Year Publishing Company, of Jacksonville, Florida.

The sermon which furnished so much material for the great Consecration Sermon was written for the consecration of Trinity Church, New Orleans, and was preached in that Church by the Bishop on March 5th, 1866. The sermon laid stress upon the inherent inferiority of Roman Theology to Anglican, and was, accordingly, in the Bishop's view eminently appropriate to the consecration of a church of the Anglican Communion in the stronghold of Southern Romanism. It created wide comment, both of approval and of disapproval, and he was requested to preach it on numerous occasions subsequently. It was a most unusual sermon to preach at the Commencement exercises of a State University, but it was the Bishop's baccalaureate sermon at the University of Mississippi in the following June—probably at the instance of Bishop Green. It also served as the visitation sermon at Montgomery, Selma, Huntsville, Mobile, and smaller places in the Diocese. Two years later it was preached in Christ

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Church, Tuskaloosa, to meet a local condition. The rector of that parish had made his submission to the Church of Rome, and had made a most theatrical exit from his rectorship, employing the last hour of his incumbency in unexpected and fierce invective against the organization from which he had not scrupled to receive a living, and filling a large portion of the church with thugs and hard-fisted Roman Catholics, who were there to see that his tirade was not cut off by main force. Information of this perversion having come to the Bishop he deposed the presbyter, and came to Tuskaloosa at the earliest opportunity. There he preached his controversial sermon on "The Faith once delivered to the saints," but he did not once allude to the pervert. He left personalities behind, and taught important truth while men were interested and therefore receptive.

The preaching of this sermon was in line with the Bishop's practice of preaching sermons that were timely and applicable to current events without being sensational. Seizing upon a matter that was engaging men's attention he would preach a sermon that bore directly on the matter without referring directly to it, and that compelled his hearers to do some thinking and make some applications for themselves. This is the genesis of his famous sermon on "Manliness," which is published in the second edition of his "Reminiscences." Two prominent gentlemen, Churchmen, of high standing in Alabama, but still under the impression that "manliness" called for the instant and deadly resentment of an insult, attempted to shoot each other down. Fortunately

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murder was not the outcome. The Bishop ordered both men suspended publicly from Communion, and went to the city where they dwelt. On the following Sunday, in their presence, he preached a sermon on the words of King David to his son Solomon, "Be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man." After passing in review the various standards of manliness held by the Indian, the Arab, and the Greek, and demonstrating the vast difference between the manliness of a "Sitting Bull" and that of an "Aristides the Just," he came to the immediate question:

"Advanced as we may be in morals and self-government, society is as yet an immeasurable distance from the precepts and example of the Son of Man. True it is that we do not, except in our Territories and new settlements, decide questions of title to land, etc., by the strong hand; but an unregulated public opinion still condones, if it does not justify, the appeal to arms in the duel or street-brawl. Still it is true, to a lamentable extent, that men are called upon to 'show themselves men,' and vindicate their manliness by the exhibition of brute force.

"The duel is passing away before the advance of Christian civilization,—chiefly, I fear, because of the political disabilities which a participation in it involves; but there is springing up in its place the street-brawl, in which men find satisfaction for their angry passions. The daily record of these bloody encounters is a blot upon the civilization, not to say the Christianity, of the age. The duel had a touch of chivalry, and originally of piety, in its character;

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for, in olden times, it was an appeal to God to 'show the right.' The modern street brawl is an unmitigated shame. The rules of ancient chivalry allowed that a combat might honorably terminate by the presence, on the field, of a lady, a priest, or a king,—the presence of the latter representing the supremacy of the law. Is the omnipresence of the King of Kings no reality to one who has sworn fealty to that Sovereign?

"Whence comes that imperious law which holds our men to such a fearful issue; which compels them, as I have often known, to stifle the best feelings in their hearts, to insult the majesty of human law, and to put their sacrilegious hands upon that prerogative which God himself proclaims 'is Mine'? If I know whence it is, it must be because men imagine that their honor—their manliness—is involved. Is this indeed so? Waive all consideration of the reason, the good citizenship, the piety of it, if possible, does manliness require it? By what rule shall we try this question? Which way shall we go to find it? Shall we go upward, and regard man after that Divine likeness in which he was made? Or shall we go downward and seek, in the resemblance which he bears to the lower creation, the source of that unruled passion which impels him, upon every provocation, to resort to brute force in deadly combat?

"Here we find it,—low down in the unreasoning passion and brute instinct which locks the beasts of the field in deadly conflict; in the venomous reptile, which strikes its fang into whatever crosses its path or purpose; in the savage state, where one's manli-

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ness is measured by his unrelenting hate to an enemy, and his manly prowess by the number of scalps that hang on the wall of his wigwam. \* \* \*

"Now go with me from the lowest grade of human nature,—the savage in his war-paint, nursing his hate as a virtue; having no word for forgiveness, because not knowing what it is. Trace this nature as it emerges from the barbarous into the Christian life (and there are men who fear God, and love their fellow-men); trace it through all its gradations of excellence, until you reach the Son of man, the 'lost Image' of God the Father, and say, 'What is it to show one's self a man?' "

Manifestly there was here no paltering with truth. The surgeon's hand was firm and pitiless toward the evil because his heart was warm and pitiful toward the evil doers. It is worth remarking that as the outcome of that sermon the old-time ideal of manliness in at least two men of that community fell from that day before the ideal of manliness so fearlessly and wisely set up by their Bishop. At the earnest request of the most prominent citizens of the place the Bishop remained in the city another week, and on the following Sunday repeated the sermon to an overflowing congregation.

The crowning thought of this sermon, that Christ is the true standard of Manliness, was directly in line with a conversation which he had but recently had with a friend of his earlier days. This friend avowed himself an unbeliever. He said he had tried to believe, but that no proof had yet satisfied him. The Bishop tried him along several lines of proof, but

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found that his friend would not admit anything that would give common ground for the beginning of the argument.

At last the Bishop asked, "Do you not think that it is the duty of every man to try to bring himself to his highest possible perfection as a man?"

"Unquestionably," said the friend.

"Then, again: In aiming at this perfection should we not seek the most perfect model for imitation? If you wished to produce a representation of any object in nature, either in sculpture or in painting, would you not seek to find the most perfect specimen of the object sought to be represented?"

"Most assuredly," he replied.

"Well, now; tell me who is the most perfect man of whom you have ever heard or read?"

The question made the gentleman serious and silent. Finally he said in a subdued tone: "I have never heard of but one man without fault."

"Who was he?"

"Jesus Christ."

"Then," said the Bishop, gathering up his previous admissions, "You have no alternative. It is your duty to try to bring yourself to your highest possible perfection by taking Christ as the mould and pattern by which to work."

The friend had an honest mind, and he said,

"You have brought me to a conclusion that I did not expect to reach; but I see no way to escape it."

And it was a conclusion that the Bishop pressed home under many varying circumstances.

Conditions seemed to call for an appropriate ser-

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mon a short while later. It was in the year just before the great panic of 1873. The nation's financial leaders were absorbed in great projects of railway building and industrial development, and they gave the keynote to the thoughts of those of smaller capacity and opportunity. Everywhere men were making haste to become rich, and Southern men, with vivid remembrance of recent scarceness and hardship, were striving in every way to make every dollar that the opportunity offered. As a rule the men of affairs had little time or interest for matters ecclesiastical or religious. Into Christ Church, Mobile, came Bishop Wilmer one Sunday morning with a sermon partly written out, but wholly thought out, on our Lord's words, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The business men of Mobile were there in full force, as they always were when it was announced that the Bishop would preach; for not only did they delight to honor their fellow-citizen, but they were ever glad, apart from any sense of duty, to hear things homiletically treated in Bishop Wilmer's masterly manner.

"It does not require the greatest capacity," the Bishop told them in the beginning, "to ensure abundance. Industry, economy, thrift, and above all, what men call luck, will often ensure abundance, where there is a lamentable deficiency in the higher qualities of intellect and heart. For they all may, and often do, exist in connection with deceit, dishonesty, cruelty, unbelief, and utter godlessness. They may be found in full perfection in the ant and



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bee, and are rewarded with abundance. Who has not seen examples of splendid genius, linked to exquisite sensibility, devoted unselfishly to the good of others, the life of Christ faintly reproduced in one of His followers—not, indeed, lacking bread, but straitened? And, on the other hand, (who has not seen it?), you will see a gross and sordid mind, absorbed in self, oblivious of human want—and rolling in abundance. \* \* \*

“After one has a sufficiency of food and raiment, and enough for the cultivation of his intellect, what further relation does abundance bear to the great needs of human nature? One cannot enjoy more than so much. He has no more appetite and digestion; often less. The web of his garments may be finer, but they are no warmer. His bed may be softer, but the sleep is not in the bed, but in him that lies thereon. Does any one doubt that, so far as the animal enjoyment is concerned, our servants, who have fewer cares, whose appetites are sharpened by labor, whose sleep is sounder from toil, enjoy more of our abundance than the owners thereof? \* \* \*

“See what he revolves in his mind: ‘Soul, thou hast much’—What? Much responsibility and great opportunities? Alas, abundance does not necessarily bring in this train of thought. ‘Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, my soul, eat, drink, and be merry. Why doesn’t every one get riches? I got me these riches.’ What thought God of these communings of a man with his soul—God, who made his ground

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to bring forth plentifully, who hates his children to be selfish, just as we hate our children to be selfish? 'Thou fool!' And was he not a fool? Oh, that a man has so lived that his Maker calls him a 'fool'! \* \*

"We look with a sort of wonderment upon the owners of large estates. We appraise their value, and say 'they are worth so much.' It is wholesome to know what God thinks of unsanctified abundance; how He comes down upon one who is regarded as a model of worldly prudence, who is held up as an example to the rising generation of what thrift and industry can accomplish, with the appalling rebuke, 'Thou fool!' And was he not a fool? To think that God had blessed him with abundance, only that he might the more steep his soul in enjoyment! To suppose that this life, so charged with sympathies and noble aspirations, consisted in abundance of possessions! \* \* \*

"What is the conclusion of the whole matter? One must not supremely seek and desire that of which life does not consist; a man's life—the Word does not say a brute's life."

The sermon did service for at least six years, and it was preached in every important church in South Alabama, the last recorded delivery being in St. John's Church, Montgomery, November 24th, 1878.

Enough has been written on this subject to show in what spirit the Bishop preached. To a young clergyman he once wrote (November 8th, 1889):

"'Let no man despise thy youth.' So said St. Paul to his son Timothy. And I say unto you, 'The

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field is the world,' and a large field it is. We must let our people realize this. They must learn that we who are commissioned to preach the Gospel are not tied down by our relations to little villages—that if they will not hear and receive and act upon the Word preached there are other fields open. You know the origin and significance of the term 'Pagan.' It meant originally a villager. The cities received the Faith long before the villagers (Pagans) received it. Thus the name 'Pagan' and 'unchristian' became synonymous terms.

"Therefore, my son, do you, looking up to Heaven for the aid of the Holy Ghost—the Quickening Spirit, the Lord and the Life-giver—preach the Word. Speak as one who represents the Christ. The men who conquer are they who preach the Master. Every word that He says is true, and makes itself manifest to every man's conscience. Some preach to the reason; some to the imagination; some to the taste. Do you preach to the conscience?"

## CHAPTER XI

### A CONTROVERSIALIST

The panic of 1875 disorganized all diocesan and parochial undertakings, crippled the larger congregations, and threatened the extinction of all missionary operations. The General Board of Missions had felt the coming stringency first, and within a brief period had cut off more than two-thirds of its appropriation to Alabama. Diocesan contributions began to dry up, partly because of general conditions, but most largely because of local demands for church buildings and other parochial enterprises which the largest contributors—Mobile, Montgomery, Selma, and Huntsville—had begun and were forced to complete. Consequent upon the reduction of income was the reduction of the clerical force. Many of the clergy moved elsewhere in hope, often vain, of bettering their financial condition, and a large number of church doors were not opened for months. The one bright ray in the darkness was a check for two thousand dollars, which Miss Catherine Wolffe of New York sent the Bishop to relieve the distress of the Diocese.

The time of recovery was long and trying. Readjustment required years. The financial and industrial depression brought, as it always brings, social

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and individual restlessness. Hundreds of men joined the procession of emigrants then moving towards the Great West. The Bishop had found two thousand communicants when he came to Alabama; he had added, in thirteen years, five thousand by confirmation; and yet scarcely three thousand communicants could be found as the result of all this work. The whole State was suffering from depletion of population. Its mineral wealth and timber resources were untouched. Factories were hardly dreamed of. The cultivated fields, the State's basis of wealth, were wearing out under negligent husbandry. In not a few portions of the State the original forest was beginning to encroach upon the fields once white with cotton, or green with waving corn, and primeval desolation was spreading her dominion.

With these conditions opposing her the Church, perforce, retired from many an advanced position. Bishop Wilmer strove patiently and hopefully to meet the demands that came from every quarter. Never a word of complaint came from his lips until the Board of Missions once more reduced its appropriation to Alabama—this time almost to the vanishing point—and then he spoke his mind about what he could not but deem the Board's spiritual kinship to Meroz (Judges 5: 23):

"In the midst of our peculiar depression," he said to his Council, "I had indulged the hope that the General Missionary Board would come to the aid of the Church in the Southern dioceses. It would have been a reasonable hope. We might have been

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pardoned for supposing that the wise admonition of the Apostle would have been heeded—‘As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith.’ I wish to say no word in disparagement of any effort that looks to the weal of any class of men. I recognize fully the claim of the barbarian. But it strikes me that, for every reason, it is the wise policy and stern duty of the Church to abandon no position that has been already gained, and to lose no ground that has been once occupied. If the Church in this country is to play the important part in the evangelization of the world that she is fitted for, then she is but poorly preparing herself for the mighty work in hand by allowing large areas of territory now occupied by Anglo-Saxon people, to lie neglected, and (which is sadder still) to permit churches already established to perish for want of aid during a period of peculiar distress and impoverishment.”

But when everything has been said, it remains that the secret of missionary failure in Alabama at the time under consideration was, as it is always and everywhere, not inability but indifference. That domestic indifference had become well-nigh open hostility is shown by a passage from the Bishop’s Council Address of 1874. “I will not press the matter further,” was his heart-sick conclusion, after a plain recital of the facts. “I have, perhaps, in the judgment of some, been already too importunate. If they think so, they must forgive me for my cause.”

Despite his discouragement the Bishop steadily went the round of his visitations, and he was able

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to say at nearly every Council that he had not failed during the year to visit every place where there were candidates for confirmation. His only interruptions were those caused by recurrent illnesses. At times he would prolong his stay in a place. But when ill, or when hurried because of precedent illness, he would curtail his visit. Not being disposed to invite sympathy by advertising his ailments, the Bishop not infrequently suffered misunderstanding on this point. On one such occasion a lady in a small parish said, complainingly,

"Bishop, you are making such a short stay with us this year."

"Yes," he retorted; "a short horse is soon curried."

Apathy as to Church extension within her own borders characterized the Church in Alabama for ten years. The missionary work disintegrated, and the missionary force slipped away. The Bishop did what he could do personally, but he remembered his promise to importune the Council on this subject no more, and in all this time he did not refer to it in any official utterance,—save that, in 1878, he complained of the "utter want of all system" in every branch of ecclesiastical endeavor, and suggested that the clergy and laity should be associated with himself in the management of the missionary work. The Council played football with the suggestion, attempting to do the thing suggested in an orderly way, but paying so much attention to the order that the doing was quite neglected.

The Bishop enjoyed a greater degree of leisure

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than had hitherto been possible with him and he occupied it partly in ecclesiastical debate, contributing by his writings articles of solid and permanent value. In conversation he would not ordinarily debate on ecclesiastical subjects, but when he did so he usually gained a victory over his antagonist by an unsuspected stroke of wit.

One day a goodly number of friends had gathered around the table of a host who was a Baptist. Many Baptists the Bishop loved much,—but not as Baptists. The host's brother, having been a Baptist, had that day been confirmed, and was, therefore, the object of some supposed wit at the mouth of his brother. Pretty soon the host turned to the Bishop and said,

"Have you heard yet, Bishop, what made brother H—— join your church?"

"No," responded the Bishop, "I never did, but I can well imagine that he had at least as good a reason for doing it as you have for not doing it."

"Perhaps that's so," returned the host; "we'll not dispute about it; but it occurred in this way: There happened to be a very rainy Sunday——so rainy, in fact, that the pastor was not at church. So brother H—— was called upon to 'lead in prayer.' He was not much used to praying in public, and was naturally very much confused. Among other things he prayed and thanked for, he said, 'We thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou art here in our midst notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather!' Brother H—— was so mortified and disgusted with his performance that from that time forth he resolved to



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join a church where he could 'pray out of a book.' "

After the laughter had subsided, the Bishop quietly observed to his host: "It is quite noticeable, Colonel, that your brother has somewhat the same reason for entering the Church that Noah had for going into the Ark."

"What is that?" asked the host.

" 'The great inclemency of the weather,' Colonel."

This was his quietly humorous method of defence. On the offensive the Bishop was simply merciless. One day he had to travel in company with a Baptist preacher, who, with what the Bishop called "the characteristic impetuosity of his sect," plunged incontinently into the water question, and proclaimed with unnecessary vehemence his views on immersion, for which nobody in the company was calling him to account. The Bishop heard him through without interruption, and then suggested that a previous question must be settled.

"What is that?" asked the Baptist.

"The question of Who is to baptize. You make it altogether a question of How. Now I contend that we must first dispose of the question of the Ministry—the 'Who' in the matter; we can then look at the 'How.' You look at the command 'Go ye and baptize,' but don't sufficiently consider who were the 'Ye' spoken to and commanded to baptize. There is a question of authority involved. It is not, as you assume, a question merely or chiefly of mode—of how much water to use, of how much wax to put on the seal—but, much more importantly, of authority to apply the element, to affix the seal."

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The Baptist confessed that he had given but little thought to this aspect of the question, and insisted that the discussion should be confined to the "mode of baptism." The Bishop consenting, the Baptist brought up in detail the familiar proof passages from Scripture, especially such incidents as the baptism of the eunuch by Philip. In every case the Bishop showed that in the absence of clear and explicit statement we are compelled to "infer the mode." "Water" was here, going "into" the water was here, and coming "up out of the water" was here. But exactly what was done when they were both in the water—whether the minister put the candidate under the water or put the water over the candidate—was not stated, and was, therefore, purely a matter of inference. He showed further that if, because it is said "They went down both into the water," we should infer that "under the water" is meant, then such inference would immerse both Philip and the eunuch, both minister and subject,—an inference that we would be loth to accept. The Baptist could not gainsay this reasoning. He lost his head and asked the Bishop a controversial question—a move that was always fatal to the Bishop's antagonist. "Don't you think," he asked, "that there are unquestionable examples in Scripture of immersion?"

"I must confess that there are," answered the Bishop, fishing. "But just now I can recall only three instances."

"Which are they?" asked the disputant, thinking to get a valuable admission.

"The first and most striking case is that which

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occurred at the Deluge. You remember that the Church at that time was in the Ark, and that the rest of the world was drowned—in all probability by being immersed. The Church of God was saved from perishing by water by being in the Ark.”

With visage not so cheerful the preacher asked for the second instance.

“The next instance I can recall is that of the immersion of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. You remember that the Israelites, who were the first to cross the Red Sea were, as the Scriptures inform us, ‘baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;’ and as they are said to have gone over ‘dry-shod,’ they must have been baptized by being sprinkled. But you remember, also, that the Egyptians, who essayed to pursue those baptized people were all drowned—most probably by being immersed. Thus twice was the Church of God saved from ‘perishing by water;’ and thousands to-day, sir, are in danger, by their excessive valuation of ‘immersion,’ of ‘perishing by water.’”

Still the Baptist pressed the question. “You spoke of three cases of immersion. What is the third?”

“The third instance is that recorded in the New Testament, where a herd of swine, under demoniacal possession, ‘ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.’ And it is quite a notable fact, my friend, that in the three unquestionable cases of immersion on record the parties seemed to be acting under malign influences, and came to a fearful end.”

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Not until this generalization was reached did the Baptist brother realize that the Bishop had taken the only method he had of shaking himself loose from a controversy which he had not desired, which he knew would be fruitless of good, and which he had, therefore, conducted on principles of interpretation that even his pursuer could understand.

In his public writings and addresses, however, there was not the most distant approach to levity or jocularity. An impartial statement of the question, a searching but not microscopic examination of arguments for and against, and a distinct and unqualified assertion of his own conclusions and position, marked his every entry into debate and his every pastoral address. The times were characterized by ecclesiastical strenuousness and by fierceness of disputation over what appear to us, as the outcome of that vigor of debate, trivial matters. Ritual was as much an occasion of ecclesiastical disruption as was doctrine. The "Catholic" movement was beginning to be more aggressive, and every peculiarity of ritual was seized upon by the ultra-conservatives as a proof of incipient Popery. One Bishop and several clergy withdrew from the Protestant Episcopal communion because they were compelled to use the word "regenerate" in the Baptismal Office, the trouble being with their own insufficient theological training, for they gave to the word "regenerate" a meaning that, probably, it never had, and that, certainly, it never had in the American Church, and then denounced as false the teaching that they misunderstood.

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Ritual questions became so burning that along with twenty-six other bishops Wilmer signed a "Declaration" in which the main point was that particular and national churches have authority to decree rites and ceremonies, and that the introduction of usages hitherto unknown in this branch of the Church should not be allowed, save under competent authority. Some had been setting forth that the rubrics and precedents of the Church of England were obligatory on the Church in America, and it was against this dangerous teaching that the "Declaration" was aimed. The contention had short shrift with Bishop Wilmer. "The question of Ritual is not settled in the Anglican Church," he said; "and it is altogether unseemly, to say the least, that precedent, and usage, and even law, should be claimed in this Church for practices the legality of which is now under discussion in the Church of England." The only "authority" that he recognized in the matter was the authority of the American Church. That this authority had not yet been exercised did not affect the right to exercise it, which was claimed in her adoption of the thirty-fourth Article of Religion. There had been no necessity heretofore for prescribing rites and ceremonies, universal custom having had the force of prescription; but now that wide divergences were appearing it was time for the Church to put an end to controversy by laying down the minimum that would be required in ritual and the maximum that would be tolerated. The Bishop declared that he was not seeking narrow limits of conformity. He held that it would be most un-

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philosophical—not to say uncatholic—to attempt to rule down every mind and every age to one form and degree of ritualistic expression. He truly asserted that whatever tends to the healthy development of sound religious sentiment may be safely made subservient to the worship of the Most High God. “Where ritualistic expression proceeds from, and is guided by, the genuine religious principle—the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost—there is no danger to be apprehended from any excess of outward manifestation, ruled by a sound discretion.” But discretion would demand that there be proportion between the customs of the people sought and the ritual offered. The Anglo-Saxon taste is less sensuous than that of the Latin peoples, and Anglo-Saxons of the salvable sort were repelled by extravagances and unnecessary, even if lawful, innovations in the conduct of the services. Some, he granted, would be attracted by a less sober and more sensuous ritual, but it would be an ill-advised policy that would seek to win the thoughtless at the risk of losing better men. And, besides, “We cannot, without the sacrifice of truth, entirely satisfy a certain class of people—the spectacle-gazers and theatre-goers, who would rather see than hear; who would find the Sermon on the Mount tame and spiritless, and yet be enraptured by a blaze of tapers.”

“Say what we will,” he went on, “of the importance of suitable forms—and their importance when recognized only as forms cannot easily be over-estimated—yet the history of the Church has proved

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that there has not always been the most healthful life where there has been the largest access of ritualistic observance. The outward and visible, although necessary to embody and preserve the inward and spiritual, may remain when the inward and spiritual has vanished—as the corpse from which the vital spark has fled. When was it that the Church achieved her most splendid triumphs—that her hosts militant wrought righteousness, subdued kingdoms, and brought the nations of the earth under the dominion of Christ? Was it not when her Bishops did the deeds of Apostles—when her Priests were clothed with righteousness and her saints sang with joyfulness—when the people first gave themselves unto the Lord, and then kept back nothing from him that could tend to his glory and to the extension of his kingdom?”

Much to the Bishop's disappointment the General Convention of 1868 declined to indicate the boundaries of ritual, and the Bishop himself began to take order to prevent unreasonable diversity of use in Alabama. In 1871 he set forth, in a pastoral Letter read in Council, an elaborate and minute directory of public worship. In this Pastoral he disclaimed intention to go beyond, or to fall short of, the plain intent of the rubrics, for he had no individual views to present beyond the limits of a just moderation, and the commonly received customs of the Church. There was in Alabama, he said, “no cause for diversity of thought or practice save that which may arise from ignorance, or inadvertence, or diversity of taste.” Conservative though the Pastoral was, and

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insisting only on what are the well-nigh universal customs of the American Church to-day, it was so different in content and manner from all other of his Pastorals that the Bishop felt called upon to explain why he had issued it. He could always give a reason for what he did, and this reason was a good one:

"Let it not be supposed for a moment," he said, "that due attention to the mode of worship has any tendency to keep before the mind the manner of the doing, and to withdraw it from consideration of the thing done. Quite the contrary. If there be one thing more than another which has led to the Ritualistic excesses which here and there have been complained of, it is the slovenly, indecorous, and irreverent manner of worship which was, alas, so common in our midst and around us. No; the effect of a due attention to such matters is to produce such an orderly, uniform, and reverent demeanor, as shall dismiss from the devout mind all thought of the manner of the doing, and set heart and mind free for the solemn engagements of meditation, praise, and prayer. And it is because the settled habit leads to the unconscious performance, and because the unconscious alone is the perfect, that I would have you in all things know how to demean yourselves in God's Holy Presence.

"It is not the regular, well-trained soldier who thinks most of the manner of his going. It is the militia-man, who, by his awkwardness and slovenliness, is perpetually thinking and reminding others of himself and his movements. And as no soldier ever fought the worse for being perfect in the drill,



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nor loved his country less because he observed closely the ritual of the army; so, no Christian soldier ever fought the battle of life less bravely, nor loved his great Captain less warmly, because he sought ever to keep his armor bright and his step true in the ranks. There may be a devotion which begins and ends in attention to the drill, as there are men who are never in the ranks except at dress parade. Of this there can be no question, and a sorry thing it is. It is an evil, however, which grows out of human frailty and hollowness. But its remedy must not be sought in slovenliness and negligence, for these can never be made the handmaids of devotion.

“ \* \* \* When I have witnessed the care and pains and discipline which they bestow upon themselves who cater for the applause of the multitude and minister to its entertainment, and then contrast therewith the frequent mistakes in miscalled and omitted words, the slovenly manner and dress, the half-prepared discourses which are not infrequently complained of in the clergy, I have felt a degree of mortification for myself as well as for them, to which I can give no adequate expression.

“We are the educators of the people in things pertaining to God. That is our business. Let us study to show ourselves in all things approved unto God; and we may be well assured that nothing is beneath our attention and pains which serves to promote the most beautiful, decorous, and perfect worship of the Sanctuary.”

The Directory of Worship, to which the Bishop had added these words, commended itself to the

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bishops of the Southern Church, and at a conference held at Sewanee in the following July it was the unanimous determination of all the bishops present that with a few minor changes to which Wilmer readily consented his suggestions should be adopted as the Godly counsel and admonition of the bishops to their respective dioceses. A committee was appointed to carry the resolutions of the bishops into effect, but summer was upon them and they postponed action until the fall. By the time the committee was able to get together in the fall the sessions of the General Convention were close at hand and it was deemed better not to anticipate the possible action of that body. Without further formality, however, the clergy of the South one by one adopted the ritual of Bishop Wilmer.

The General Convention did not do what the Bishop expected it to do. In its refusal to pass prohibitory laws he was well pleased, because he felt that the wit of man could never catalogue a sufficient number of things prohibited to cover every possible violation of law, and that to prohibit a few things was to give legal standing to things not prohibited. But in its refusal to establish a positive law of ritual, prescribing with exactness what the officiating minister might do and should do, and beyond which he might not lawfully go, he was disappointed. He could not see the wisdom of declaring that separate Churches have authority to prescribe rites and ceremonies and then of refusing both to prescribe and interpret them. "We keep, in some respects," he exclaimed, "not so much a childlike, as a servile, relation to the

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Mother Church, \* \* \* wearing voluntarily the chains from which she herself emancipated us, and would fain herself be free."

But nothing was hurt by the Convention's failure to legislate on the subject of ritual. In most cases a temperate discussion and a little more enlightenment were the only things necessary to bring about the substantial uniformity of worship that characterizes the vast body of the Church to-day. In Alabama the Bishop's personal influence was so great that the mere expression of a wish on his part brought about such change as he desired. The order of service was well-nigh identical in all the parishes of the Diocese—simple, unornate, but dignified and impressive. As much could not always be said about the layman's part in the services. Ten years later the Bishop was not satisfied with the behavior of some congregations and of some persons in every congregation. He spent several weeks as the guest of Dr. Peter Bryce, the eminent Superintendent of the Alabama Insane Hospital, a man whose name the State has since honored by incorporating it in the official title of the institution. Her daily services were said for several hundred of the inmates, and every morning the Bishop would speak a few words of counsel and hope, of sympathy and instruction. To his next Council he gave his impressions of these services: "The only difference perceptible to me between an assembly of such persons and that of a promiscuous gathering of those who pass for sane people was, that the inmates of the Asylum were a little more reverent and well behaved."

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The struggle that was going on through these years between the Bishop's natural tendency towards conservatism and his intellectual perception of the reasonableness of change in non-essentials to meet changed conditions is nowhere more clearly manifest than in his discussion of the revision of the Book of Common Prayer. Although this revision was not concluded until 1892 it had been agitated in 1853, renewed in 1856, and brought up in one shape or another for twenty years. Not until 1880 was the revision determined upon, and even then revision must content itself with "enrichment" and "flexibility of use;" doctrine must not be touched. Up to this time revision of the Book was, in the minds of many, bound up with revision of doctrine. It was to revision in this connection that Bishop Wilmer addressed himself in his Council address of 1874.

He confessed at the outset that to him the Book of Common Prayer, as it then stood, had no fault, but was, like the King's daughter, all glorious within; and that merely to contemplate the thought of revising the Book did violence to his every instinct of reverence. He confessed, moreover, to a sinking of the heart when he contemplated the undertaking of such a task in this new world "where learning is superficial, piety dwarfed, and only our native conceit—like primeval forests—fully grown." Yet he recalled the fact that it was only through repeated revisions that the Book had attained its seeming perfection, and that it would be perfectly proper to subject it to a new revision should it be shown that such a revision was necessary. This necessity was not yet

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patent. It was true that there were good men in the Church who could not conscientiously use the Prayer Book. But was their criticism legitimate? Was it not possible that the fault lay in the objectors' own mind, in the lack of good early training, in the force of remaining prejudice? It was, at least, a proper question, if revision was to be pressed on this ground, whether it were not more sensible for the complainants to revise their own views to suit the standard than to revise the standard to meet their views. When clergymen, however, good they might be, were unwilling to minister the doctrine of Christ as this Church had received the same—a doctrine enshrined in the Prayer Book, a ministration vowed at their ordination—it was at least as fair to infer some defect in their theological training as to impute the fault to the doctrinal expressions of the Prayer Book. The doctrines of Regeneration in Baptism and the Real Presence in the Holy Communion were the doctrines that disturbed men so much—the old questions, “How can a man be born again?” and “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”—and to consideration of these doctrines did the Bishop address himself, concluding with this expression of opinion:

“As it regards the question of the virtue of the Sacraments, and their mode of operation, we have some extremists in both directions, but they are very few indeed. There may be differences of opinion among the large mass of our clergy, but they are not vital differences—in many cases a mere strife about words. The sound and moderate minds among us—

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and they constitute by far the great mass—are much nearer together in opinion than they themselves sometimes think and are willing to allow. The one party lays greater apparent stress upon the grace of the Sacrament—the other upon the condition of the recipient. Is there not a part of the truth for which each is contending, and may it not be that in this way the whole truth is conserved? The history of religious controversy is full of similar illustrations, and it will be found, upon a comprehensive view of the history of Doctrine, that the whole body of truth has been usually, if not always, thus maintained; by each mind setting forth and keeping in view the particular side of truth which it sees most clearly. \* \* And as it regards the matter of Ritual: If we leave out the extreme manifestations of a very few men, the question reduces itself very much to a question of esthetics, upon which the best men will differ and should not wrangle.”

But the Bishop was not generally indifferent to doctrine and ritual, nor did he refer all differences to esthetics and logomachy. That he viewed extremists with little complacency is evident from some language used by him in 1875, when the rejection by the General Church of Drs. DeKoven and Seymour was still fresh in men's minds, and the application of the words to them could not be doubted. The institution of the office of Bishop, he said, “was for the edifying of the body of Christ, and not for the elevation or glorification of any man. \* \* \* In looking back upon the action of this Church for the last few years, one thing in her temper and

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disposition is unmistakable: That whilst wisely and necessarily tolerant of a wide latitude of opinion and usage on the part of her clergy and laity, she is not disposed to confer her highest office upon men of avowed or suspected extreme views—that, in her judgment, it is one thing to tolerate a man, and quite another to endorse him and prefer him to honor. And who would have it otherwise? We want no partisan bishops in the councils or administration of this Church. We must need have extreme opinions, as every field must have its outside rows. But the husbandman does not select his seed-grain from the outside rows, but from the middle of the field, where the ears are more perfectly formed and completely filled.

“And the Bishops are the seed-grain of the Church.”

The Bishop was not partisan in this position, for he applied it impartially to the case of every bishop-elect, and voted for or against his consecration irrespectively of his personal friendship and admiration for some on whose election he was to pass. Many years later his application of this principle led him to vote against the confirmation of the election of Phillips Brooks as Bishop of Massachusetts.

It had been a strong desire for Church Unity that caused the Bishop to go to England in 1867 in the hope of getting a pronouncement on the subject from the English-speaking bishops at their first meeting. For several years thereafter Christian unity was a subject uppermost in the Bishop's thoughts. But regard for the proportion of the faith led him to issue a Pastoral in which cogent reasons were given for

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the Church's refusal to join in union prayer-meetings, revivals, and the like, and to make strong defence of the Church's alleged lack of liberality and Christian charity in dealing with the bodies of Christians that formed the bulk of society. This Pastoral was based on St. Paul's affirmation, "Charity rejoiceth in the truth." After drawing the clear distinction between sincerity and truth, he proceeded to show that the charity which is bound to truth cannot, because it is charity, vent itself in harsh judgments and evil speakings, and will not, because it rejoices in truth, suppress convictions and become coldly indifferent to important distinctions, for the sake of peace and quiet. But it will speak the truth in love, rejoicing in what truth is already held by others rather than resting in condemnation of what errors have not been thrown aside, and inviting to common worship and ministration that all the truth may be embraced. It will not refrain from this exhortation for fear of being scoffed at as claiming superior sanctity. It will decline to say to others, "You are right, and I am right; and though we hold contradictory views both of us are right." Of course this position is called "un-charitable." But, said the Bishop, "we cannot ask the men of the world to interpret for us the law of Christian charity. They cannot be our judges in this matter. To them the varying and conflicting opinions of Christian people—even when they concern such questions as the nature and origin of ministerial authority, yes, even the nature and office of Christ himself—are of less consequence than the petty and transient political issues of the hour. We should



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have no aspirations for the reputation of that charity which means indifference, nor should we dread the imputation of bigotry, when it means a deep devotion to, and joy in, the truth. King Solomon, the wise, discovered the true mother of the child by preparing to divide and mutilate it. The false mother was willing to compromise in any way. It requires not the wisdom of Solomon to determine that he who will be satisfied with the truth divided and mutilated is not nearly related to, nor rejoiceth in, the truth. \* \* \*

“Temporary unions for prayers and exhortations cannot solve the problem. I fear they rather hinder and postpone it. It is a confession of something wrong, and yet not a full and frank confession. It presents a palliative, where a cure is needed. It satisfies the mind with something infinitely short of Christian duty and privilege. It patches up a serious breach with a hollow truce. \* \* \* Yet there is something very captivating in the thought of such a truce to hostilities. \* \* \*

“It is alleged that Christian charity demands such unions and compromises, and that they who fall not in with the proposed method are sadly lacking in that exalted virtue. It is urged ‘that for a little while, and in order to effect a specific good, Christian people ought to drop their peculiarities, and come together in worship and fellowship.’ If this be true, ought they not for a stronger reason to do this, viz., in order to promote general and permanent good? This must be so, unless a particular and transient good is more desirable than an enduring and general

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good; or unless it can be shown that the good sought is to be found in only occasionally letting down the denominational fences, and feeding in a common pasture. And if, for the sake of a temporary good, there be any peculiarity which one can properly lay aside for an hour, a day, a week, what hinders but that for the sake of a continued and greater good, he may not lay it aside for a month, a year, forever!

\* \* \*

“But if it be alleged, as it is, ‘that it is not a mere peculiarity that is laid aside, but a principle, which cannot be given up, but only held in abeyance, for a little while, in order to impress a community, and to prevail with God by united prayer’—what then? Is not this a spectacle?—a multitude of Ministers of God—witnesses for truth and principle—coming together and combining to suppress, each for himself, a part of God’s truth, and for God’s sake, as is alleged, and that on the ground that God has revealed unimportant truth! What a spectacle in the sight of Heaven! It may, possibly, for a while impose upon the multitude, for they are easily deceived by any superficial and sensational movement that is popularized to the public ear. But how can it be justified in the sight of God—this holding fast and loose by certain truths? It is these very truths and principles, so called, which they are willing to ignore at times, that constitute the bases severally of the denominational bodies. The unity of the Church of God was broken that these bases of organizations might be maintained; and yet, for any particular purpose, they may be suppressed! Is this, indeed,

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of the nature of charity, whose essence is supreme love to God and veneration for His Truth? \* \* \*

"Not only the attitude of this Church to-day towards all these popular union movements is not uncharitable, but, on the contrary, the highest and most far-reaching charity demands us to maintain the position which we occupy. We are set for the maintenance of a great truth. Our numbers are not great—and the raillery which amuses itself with our want of numbers, as if truth and right were to be determined by a plurality of votes, is altogether out of place, both impertinent and irrelevant—but our position is one of incalculable importance. We hold to that which 'was always, is now, and ever shall be,' Were we to abandon it, or compromise it, we should surrender the point round which Christendom must at last rally. \* \* \* Not uncharitably, but most charitably, this Church utters her protest against all new dogmas—come they whence they may—and invites all Christian people to walk in the ancient path of primitive truth and Apostolic order. It is this her position that compels her to stand aloof from all abortive and delusive compromises—not from a spirit of separatism, nor in a spirit of unsympathizing indifference, God forbid, but with the purpose to hold the ancient truth as settled and received from Holy Scriptures, and thus to furnish the only possible center of peace and union for all Christian people.

"In this her Charity rejoiceth, yea, and will rejoice."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BISHOP AND THE NEGRO

In 1883 the subject of the evangelization of the Negro assumed a prominent place in the mind of the Church.

For many years the Church's old-time influence among this race had been waning, and in several dioceses the Negro churches were practically extinct. The precipitate action of the General Convention of 1865 in committing all religious instruction of the Negro to the "Protestant Episcopal Freedmen's Commission" was largely responsible for this decadence of the work. It was felt by Southern bishops that this step, schismatic in nature, was taken in distrust of themselves, and they would have none of it. They took the ground that the Bishop of a diocese is charged with the selection of instrumentalities, and that while they were willing to receive subordinate help, they would recognize no co-ordinate authority. Assistance on these terms was not forthcoming, and Bishop Wilmer, at least, stood still.

He would have been compelled to stand still even if he had not chosen to do so. With the newly and violently acquired freedom of the Negro, there had come to him impatience and temporary distrust of those who alone knew him well enough to be able to

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benefit him permanently. The former slaves were puffed up by the harangues of demagogues, who used them as ladders by which to enter the State Treasury and the National Congress, and they became possessed of a conceit that misconstrued every effort in their behalf as a tribute to their importance. They would take neither their politics nor their religion from their former owners. Northern carpet-baggers and renegade Alabamians initiated them into the mysteries of political economy. Preachers of their own color made broad for them the strait and narrow way. Preachers of the white race, their former trusted friends, were treated with that disingenuousness which has generally characterized the response of the Freedman to the approach of the Caucasian. While the Northern press was charging the Southern bishops with inertness and indifference to Negro missions and was picturing the Negro as looking up hungrily to the shepherds for food while the shepherds were repelling them from the church doors, within whose portals was abundance of bread, the fact was that the Negro was waving off the Bishop and with great unanimity was cutting off every avenue of approach from the white clergy.

When we recall the political influences that played about him, and the hero-worship with which he was greeted by those who came in casual touch with him, this altered attitude of the Negro was perfectly natural. But however natural it was an attitude of such nature as to compel his would-be benefactors to withhold their hands until the fever should cool and reason return.

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The outcome is a familiar story. Social equality was a will-o'-the-wisp. Political superiority was soon wrested from the usurping hands. Legislation as a bread-winning occupation gave way to labor in the sweat of the face. Whether he would or not, the ex-slave was forced to turn to his former master and follow him, if not from love, at least because of the loaves and fishes.

When this came about it was at last possible to undertake the preaching of the Gospel to him, and Bishop Wilmer was one of the first to make the attempt. At the outset he had clearly in mind a truth, a prevision, that many have not been able to grasp, even yet: That these people would not come into the Church in any great numbers. It was his conviction that few would come at first, the few that loved the order and reverence that characterize the Church. He felt that for a long time these would be a very small fragment of the mass, but that as they were elevated by education they would become centers of good influence and would, like salt, help season the race. This, however, was to be a work of time and patience, as well as a labor of love. The Church's influence was for a long while to be of such kind among the blacks as it had been among the whites—out of all proportion to the number of adherents, and a standard for even those who were unconscious of her claims.

With this avowed limit of hope he was willing to undertake the work on a small scale and was content to see small numerical gains. In 1882 he brought the matter formally before his Council. He found

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an able coadjutor in the Rev. J. S. Johnston, then rector of Trinity Church, Mobile, and now Bishop of West Texas, who as chairman of the committee to whom was referred this portion of the Bishop's address, made a vigorous report, outlining the steps necessary in leading the Negro to true and acceptable worship of God. Premising that worship necessitates intelligence, he insisted that no lasting work could be done that did not seek along with religious instruction the co-ordinate development of mind and body.

The Bishop's recommendation, and the adoption of this report by the Council, obtained considerable currency in the North, and funds were shortly forthcoming, to the amount of six thousand dollars, for the purchase of ground and the erection of a church, rectory, and school-house. A Negro man was appointed lay-reader and services were begun. At the end of a year, through the fostering care of the Bishop and the immediate supervision of Mr. Johnston, there were fourteen communicants, six candidates for confirmation, a day-school of thirty-nine pupils, and a Sunday school of one hundred. It is not the purpose of this record to go further into this work than to say that it has been developing slowly through the subsequent years and stands to-day for what the Bishop originally intended it—its one hundred communicants a little leaven in a Negro population of twenty thousand. But the immediate effect of the establishment of this work was a recrudescence of effort throughout the South and of editorial articles and addresses throughout the Church. Bishops,

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dioceses, and communities took, as might have been anticipated, most diverse courses.

Early in the summer of 1883 the Board of Managers of General Missions invited Bishop Wilmer to address the General Convention, sitting as the Board of Missions, at its coming session in Philadelphia in the following October. Meanwhile, upon call from Bishop Green of Mississippi, Chancellor of the University of the South, a conference on the relation of the Church to the Colored People of the South was held at Sewanee from July 25th to July 28th. All the Southern Bishops were in attendance except Whittle of Virginia, Galleher of Louisiana, and Beckwith of Georgia. It was a body of men who were already prominent, or were afterwards to become prominent, in the councils of the Church. Among the clergy were Pike Powers, of Virginia; C. M. Beckwith, of Georgia; Robert, of Missouri; Porter, of South Carolina; Tidball and Gray, of Tennessee; Harris, of Mississippi; J. L. Tucker, of Alabama; and Shoup, of Western Texas. It took the Conference four days to construct a platform on which all could stand. More than fifty speeches were made, some of them of remarkable eloquence, and one, by Mr. C. R. Miles, of South Carolina, so powerful, that immediately after its delivery the meeting adjourned for the day in order to regain its judicial frame of which the speech had robbed it. Utterance was given to the most widely varying views as to what action, if any, was expedient; but there was entire unanimity of opinion in regard to the forming of separate and independent



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organizations for the black people. "There can be but one fold and one chief shepherd for all the people in any field of Ecclesiastical designation," they said. "It is entirely inexpedient, both on grounds of Ecclesiastical polity, and also of a due consideration of the interests of all concerned, to establish any separate, independent Ecclesiastical organization for the colored people dwelling within the territory of our constituted Jurisdictions." But they recommended to the General Convention a Canon "Of Missionary Organizations within Constituted Episcopal Jurisdictions," in which provision was made for a separate convocational organization of the Negro Churchmen, under the presidency of an Archdeacon or other appointee of the Bishop, and for the complete separation of the clergy list of such organization from that of the Diocesan organization, unless the Diocesan Convention should make special provision for their admission into union with the Diocesan Convention.

Bishop Wilmer opposed this recommendation of the Conference with all his might because it introduced (needlessly, as he thought) the objectionable feature of class legislation. He might have favored separation on the ground of incapacity and ignorance, he said, but not on that of color. He did not, indeed, go as far as Bishop Thompson, who said, in the course of debate, that in principle it is as ridiculous to ask how we shall reach the man with a black skin as to ask how we shall reach the man with red hair; but he did assert, what was a notorious fact, that there were multitudes of white people in some

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of our States who, in intelligence, education, and manners, were even inferior to that class of colored people who were prepared to enter the communion of this Church. If a separate organization was desired it must be, he asserted, an organization for the ignorant and unintelligent of all colors.

On the merits of the question considered in the abstract there can be no doubt that the Bishop's contention was sound. But it is a fact that divisions on grounds other than of ideal right have existed in the Church from the time when St. Peter was set to preach to the Circumcision, and St. Paul to the Uncircumcision. It is of the essence of catholicity in the mind of the Church that when she cannot do her work in an ideal way she will acknowledge the fact and do the best she can with possible conditions. It was a fact that Southern men would have nothing to do with a Church which allowed an increasing proportion of negroes in her Councils. It was another fact that the negroes did not care for membership in an organization in which they were barely tolerated and plainly not wanted. And, in fact, it was not of the essence of the Gospel that negroes should sit in Council with white men. The Sewanee Conference accepted these facts as they were, and sought to preserve apostolic fellowship of the negro through the episcopate and not through the diocesan councils.

So the resolution was adopted by an all but unanimous vote of the bishops, presbyters, and laymen present. Bishop Wilmer stood absolutely alone. He asked to be recorded as being in cordial sympathy

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with the object of the proposed canon, but as being unable to vote for it, since, in his opinion, it involved the idea of class legislation in the Church of Christ, wherein there was one body for all the baptized, whether Jew or Gentile, whether bond or free. His own position, as expressed in a resolution which received no support, was "that it would be contrary to the mind of Christ, inconsistent with true catholicity, and detrimental to the best interests of all concerned, to provide any separate and independent organization or legislation for the peoples embraced within the communion of this Church."

Though he stood alone in this Conference, Bishop Wilmer found that his position was that of the majority of the General Convention which met in the following October; for the Convention declined to enact any such canon as the Conference had recommended.

Had the Bishop, in his address before the General Convention, confined himself to the one point at issue he would have met with general commendation, at least for broadness of vision and tenderness of sympathy. But he was not slow to express other and quite as positive convictions about the negro's incapacity for a separate ecclesiastical organization, an incapacity of both body and headship. "They cannot do without our pilotage in their present state, and the wisest among them know it; while the ambitious are willing to risk all for their self-advancement. Strange it is that men who would not risk themselves in business and the arts of life without the headship of the white man will create churches and ministries,

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and form schemes of doctrine and discipline, without the consciousness of inadequacy to such a task!"

"My own opportunity of estimating the susceptibility of the black man to the influence of genuine piety has been unusually great," he declared. "For many years I have ministered to him on the plantations of Virginia, and I have expended no ministerial labor which was followed by more marked and permanent result. But I gave him views of religious truth which reached his head, his heart, and his life. \* \* \* the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. The present prevailing system among the blacks, who have drifted away from the pilotage of their white brethren, appeals almost exclusively to their emotional and nervous systems—running them into insane paroxysms—and there is, oft-times, but a single step down from a seeming religious exaltation to the lowest act of sensuality and vice."

What the Bishop said in this address was quoted and garbled far and wide. He published the entire address, not as a vindication of himself, but as an authoritative declaration of the principles which would direct any work among the negroes to which he would at any time give his official sanction and support.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ECCLESIASTICAL AND DOCTRINAL POSITIONS

In the matter of bringing forth sermons all clergymen have their periods of fruitfulness and periods of barrenness, their times of creative power and their times of dependence upon habit and momentum.

From 1882 to 1888 Bishop Wilmer was persistent in his labors and conscientious in his visitations. Diocesan readjustment in consequence of the development of the mineral region, and ecclesiastical growth in consequence of the general tendency to take a larger view of everything, gave an importance to Alabama that she had never had before; and the Bishop was not slow to take advantage of every opportunity and to meet every emergency. But it was a period in which he did little sermon work. Practically all the sermons that he preached within these six years were old sermons.

Of course his characteristic digressions and interpolations were so numerous that the manuscript which he invariably carried into the pulpit was often little more than the frame-work. Even the frame-work was thrown away, if for sufficient reason a different line of thought seemed better for the immediate occasion. Often in these old sermons thus preached will be found, half-way through, the note,

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"Stop here," indicating a radical curtailment, and, in effect, a different sermon, while yet the manuscript was unchanged.

One of the reasons why the Bishop produced no new sermons in this period was the feeling that his days were numbered. He was now sixty-six years of age, and the ordinary disabilities of age were beginning to creep upon him. His council addresses and visitation sermons for a few years before had given evidence of an increasing sense of infirmity, and in 1882 he wrote to a friend in Berryville, Virginia: "I have been feeling very poorly for many months. My family and many friends tell me I am depressed. It may be so, but I cannot repress the feeling that my work is almost done. Having this feeling, and not being able to do much, my mind travels back. My heart goes with it. I gather up the memories of loved ones." For many years it had been his thought that he was visiting a parish, or bidding farewell to a Council, for the last time; and it was this fixed idea that gave peculiar power and solemnity to a sermon that he had written in 1877 and laid aside for four years after preaching it only twice. This was his sermon on St. John 9:4—"I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." From 1881 to 1891 it was his favorite sermon. From 1881 to 1891 he preached it twenty-six times. Many of the sermons preached by the Bishop about this time were so unsatisfactory to him when he reviewed them in after years that he burned them up.

The founding of Anniston was the one feature of

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the industrial development of Alabama that gave the Bishop genuine pleasure, since it was the one feature that seemed to be entirely devoid of selfishness and Mammon-serving. He has left on record a description of labor conditions there, and the description is valuable as being one of very few enthusiastic commendations that he ever set on paper.

"I have in my mind's eye," he said to the Council, "a nook of land within the borders of the State of Alabama, just where the slopes run into mountains—a beautiful amphitheatre. Beautiful now, but a short while since a howling wilderness. A ragged husbandry, where there was any sign of human life, had done nothing but deface and render hideous the fair face of Nature. In the center rises the tall and murky smoke-stack of the furnace, that very embodiment of tireless energy. The hills around yield abundance of coal and ore to feed this voracious monster. 'Oxen strong to labor' have torn up the rugged earth and obliterated the seaming gullies. Smiling fields of green—grass and grain—replace the thorns and briars. On the swelling slopes nestle the tasteful dwellings of the proprietors, who give all they have of skill and industry to guide the enterprise. Rows of comfortable tenements, not without flowers, where the workmen find their homes, lie convenient to the center of labor.

"What more? What more is needed? Here are the twin factors, labor and capital, work and wages. There is nothing in all this: you can see most of all this anywhere. But more than all this meets the eye. Hard by is the chapel for worship, and the

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school for the instruction of the little ones. The ground is laid off and sites are selected for the church and rectory. The rector is at his post and guides the school, on Sunday telling the good old story to the people and their children. In that nook of redeemed Earth is heard the hum of busy and successful industry. There is no just complaining in those streets; no stint and no grudging; no promise to pay without fulfilment. A liberal and intelligent policy guides the whole movement.

"This unusual outlay for religious worship and education must swallow up some of the immediate profits; I doubt whether it does in the end. Satisfied labor, in the long run, must more than replace the outlay, for it is not a very far step towards the solution of the problem of the day: How to make labor friendly to capital. \* \* \* \*

"The example above cited is in illustration of the fact that the capitalist can look kindly upon the interests of his workmen. The proprietors at Anniston have ever done this. As I said to them years ago, 'You are solving for yourselves the problem of the day; ending, I hope, for yourselves the unnatural conflict. Let capital seek to bless the laborer, and the laborer will look kindly upon him that brings blessings to himself and his household.'"

Besides his address on "The Relation of the Church to the Negro" in 1884, the only other Council address of more than ordinary interest and significance in this period was that of 1886 on "Revivals."

Moody and Sankey, and Bliss and Whittle, the



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preacher and the singer supplementing each the other's labors, were passing from city to city and moving the hearts of men; and great was the company of preachers of like methods but lower attainments. Within the limits of the Protestant Episcopal Church the "missioner" now so familiar a figure in every village was beginning to introduce himself. The conditions were, the Bishop thought, of sufficient urgency to call for a clear statement of possible benefit and possible injury, both in accepting these extraneous agencies and in rejecting them. Through his ministerial life he had had more faith in revivals than had most of his clerical brethren. More than once he had witnessed their reality and their genuine and abiding good. There were counterfeits, of course, as of all good things, and it was of paramount importance that the real revival be differentiated from the seeming, and that the tonic be not confounded with the food. "We cannot put limits to the exercise of divine sovereignty, nor can we make the streams of salvation to flow along in prescribed and ordinarily appointed channels. The River of God is full of water, and at times overflows its banks. But these extraordinary manifestations take their place as phenomenal, and do not affect the ordinary and established course of things. At times meteors flame across the firmament, and meteoric lights flash out, as stars shoot madly from their spheres; but the constellations shine on, the sun and moon shed their wonted light, and the established order and harmony reign in the worlds above. \* \* Beneath the quiet heavens the constructive forces of

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Nature and Grace do their quiet work—as the forces of gravitation and vegetation. Not in the wind, nor in the whirlwind, come the ordinary summons and aid to the duties of life. The Kingdom of God develops within one after the established order of growth; ‘first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.’ This is the normal law of growth, and full and symmetrical Christian character is found only among children trained from youth in habits of piety. But few are thus trained. The vast majority grow up as ill weeds. They lead a prodigal life, have left their Father’s house, and are wandering in the wilderness. What can we do for such as these? The normal law of Christian development cannot be applied to them. The majority of these men can never be reached except by such as have a special mission to touch them. And since revivals do touch them revivals should receive from us a prayer for the divine blessing upon them, even while we deprecate some of the machinery used in them.”

So far went the Bishop in advocacy of revivals. Immediately followed the pith of his discourse, a condemnation of the revival system:

“The stimulus of the revival system, when relied on as a system, and resorted to as an antidote to a decaying piety, but poorly supplements the sources of nutrition which flow from early religious nurture, habitual and reverential worship, commandments steadily enforced, and Sacraments and Ordinances frequented.

“The use of stimulants, whether for body or soul, has to be guarded with a watchful eye. You may

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stimulate unduly the roots of a young plant, and it will take on rapid growth, but to its ultimate injury and perhaps deformity. It is nutrition rather than stimulus that is needed in order to health, strength, and a hearty old age.

“This is the great evil of the revival system where it is relied on, as it is with many persons, to excite to action a jaded religious sensibility. It stimulates when the enfeebled soul calls for nourishment. Instead of entering into the closet and shutting the door and communing with the Father; instead of sitting at the feet of the Blessed Lord and learning, of His lowliness and meekness, how to find strength and rest for their weary and heavy-laden souls; instead of engaging actively in works of beneficence for the poor and destitute, and receiving the refreshment which comes to those who refresh the souls of others; instead of seeking nourishment and growth by walking, as one of old did, ‘in all the Ordinances and Commandments of the Lord blameless’—recourse is too often had to the public gathering, where, without effort or sacrifice, the soul is excited by startling appeals, sentimental singing, and impassioned oratory. There is thus a habit of intemperance engendered, and there are those who rush to such excitement as the drunkard hastens to his dram. Intemperance is a widespread and multiform evil; by no means confined to those who unduly excite their minds with stimulating drink.

“It is our duty carefully to consider the age in which we live and its inevitable tendencies. The Christian faith, whilst making its impression upon

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every age, is, beyond doubt, impressed by the prevailing spirit of the times. We live in what is commonly called a fast age—an age in which great results are looked for in a short time and with but little labor. The marvellous inventive powers of the last fifty years, in facilitating labor by machinery, has contributed to the same result. When we can cross continents in a few hours, bring the ends of the earth together in a few seconds, in an instant of time procure pictures of earth and planets, it is natural and, indeed, almost inevitable, that we should look quite unconsciously for the same speedy results in matters pertaining to spiritual things.

“Now-a-days, fortune is to be amassed in a few speculations; knowledge is to be acquired in a few easy lessons; fame to be built up in a day. Is it surprising that men should expect to be made religious by a revival?

“What is the result? Fortune is ephemeral, knowledge is superficial, and fame impossible. Is it surprising that religion should be—alas! too often—a mere paroxysm? \* \* \*

“We must bear in mind that it is not in consequence of much that is in bad taste and worse theology that good may proceed from such labors, but despite these drawbacks and infelicities, and because Christ is preached. Therefore it is that, whilst we cannot fall into line with them, we yet do not dare to forbid them. Such, it seems to me, must be our attitude towards all such modes of working. If they are casting out devils in the sacred name of Christ, we are told by our Lord himself ‘no†

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to forbid them.' But He does not tell us to follow them."

A consideration of missions and missionaries, the Church's counterpart of revivals and revivalists, came in natural order after the paragraphs quoted. The Bishop did not oppose them, save in respect to the irregularities of the "After Meetings." "So long as they consist of extended services in connection with the prescribed order of Church worship," he said, "they present no novel feature, nor call for comment. They have proved eminently useful, especially in rural districts, where there is a lack of religious privileges. Our Lenten season affords to all our people large opportunities for instruction and devotion. A well observed Lent never fails to revive a congregation."

The General Convention of 1886 met in Chicago. Though he was in bad health Bishop Wilmer was in attendance on all the sessions, and added much to the value of the debates in the House of Bishops on Prayer Book revision and change of name.

The Bishop was strongly opposed to the revision of the Book of Common Prayer, save in the one respect of flexibility in the use of the offices as they stood. As to "enrichment of the Liturgy," he doubted the ability of the Church to accomplish any such work amidst the lunches, and dinners, and whirl of the modern General Convention; and in a much quoted speech he publicly thanked God "that our Liturgies, Creeds, and Pastoral Epistles were written before the days of General Conventions!"

But since revision was inevitable he sought to

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confine it to the narrowest limits, and to conform all new matter to the spirit of the old; and when various propositions touching the same matter came to a vote he was always for that which carried with it the least change. In this Convention and the two following—the principal labor of all three being to complete the work of revision—he succeeded twice in persuading the House of Bishops to change the words of the Marriage Service “adorn and beautify” to “hallow and sanctify;” but twice the Clerical and Lay Deputies refused to concur in the amendment, and at the last the Bishops surrendered—much to the disgust of the Bishop of Alabama, who said that it strained his loyalty to the Church to be forced to use words that relegated the function of our Lord at the wedding in Cana of Galilee to precisely that performed by flowers and bridesmaids!

When a special day was set aside for the Feast of the Transfiguration, he strenuously, and, in the House of Bishops, successfully, opposed August 6th as the date, moving as a substitute that it be placed some time in the Epiphany Tide. His argument was that the Transfiguration was an Epiphany, or Manifestation, in the highest sense; that it was contrary to every law of association and congruity to set it at the farthest point from the season in which the Church sets forth the various manifestations of divine power in the Son of Man; and that to place it at a time subsequent to the commemoration of the Resurrection and the Ascension was to be guilty of “a glaring anachronism.” The argument has never been controverted; but the House of Bishops, having

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adopted the resolution of the Bishop of Alabama three times, retreated three times from its position in the interest of harmony with the lower House.

The punctuation and capitalization of the Book of Common Prayer according to the revision of 1892 aroused the Bishop's ire. When the handsome memorial copy presented by a wealthy layman to every member of the Convention came into his possession the first thing he did with it was to sit down, and, with pen and ink, punctuate and capitalize according to his own idea. The typographical mutilation of the Lord's Prayer was especially obnoxious to him. Heaven was, to him, a locality, and he said: "If we spell 'Mobile' with a capital 'M,' how ridiculous it is to spell the locality of the Lord's throne with a little 'h!'"

In the matter of Change of Name he took a position widely different from that which he had occupied in 1862 at the General Council of the Church in the Confederate States. Then he had declared against the insertion of the word "Catholic" in the title of the Church on the ground that that cannot properly be applied to the part which is applicable only to the whole. Now he suggested as a proper name, "The Primitive Catholic Church in the United States of America," this designation being, as he said descriptive, distinctive, and catholic. But he made this suggestion only in case the name should be changed. Though he himself did not care for the present name of the Church, he opposed any change so long as opposition was manifested by others to any extent; and he declared that certain dioceses would withdraw

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from the General Convention if the name endeared to them by its century of use were to be abandoned. In the sentiment of these dioceses he shared to great extent, but not so far as to be blind to the infelicity of the present name. "But before giving my consent and vote for any change," he declared, "some conditions would have to be satisfactorily settled. If, for example, a change of name were proposed by a certain class of men—and the fact cannot be denied that there is such a class—who desired to take away the title 'Protestant,' because they wished to favor that against which the protest was aimed, then I would join issue with them just there. \* \* This must first be settled before I, for one, am willing to argue seriously the question of a change of name, viz., That there is meant no step backward from the principles of the 'Reformation.' And, again, there should be no change attempted until the mind and heart of the Church are prepared and educated for the change. This is supremely, a family matter—a matter not to be carried by a triumphant majority over a reluctant minority. Incalculable evil and loss would surely follow from such a victory."

When the Bishop turned to the administration of his own diocese matters of name, rite, and form never long or very seriously engaged his attention. Shortly after he had summed up to his own Council the work of the General Convention he appears as in every way stressing the deeper realities of religion:

While on his summer vacation he wrote to a munificent friend in Alabama: "You must know—for



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you are a man of intuition—that I have a deep regard for you and yours. You don't know how much you have helped me. A bishop should be a fountain of beneficence to his fellows. You have the higher blessedness of 'giving,' I the lower of 'receiving.' Therefore, I strive to get both benedictions—receiving, then giving. I venerate your veneration for your dear father. Intensify it, and multiply it ten thousand fold, and you will approximate but faintly the love and reverence due to 'Our Father.' You have the 'natural' in a high degree; let it go upward into the 'spiritual,' whereby you can look up to Him who gave you your earthly father, and say with child-like trust and love, 'Abba, Father.' ”

His sense of the Fatherhood of God had become so pronounced in these days that he could not tolerate any preaching that seemed to ignore, to say nothing of antagonizing, that Fatherhood, and the tenderer side of it, as the supreme characteristic of God. At a diocesan Council one of the most prominent, pious and eloquent of his clergy preached a sermon on “the day of the wrath of the Lamb,” as depicted in the sixth chapter of Revelation. He had much to say of judgment, retribution, and divine vengeance on evil doers, and the refrain of paragraph after paragraph was “the wrath of the Lamb.” It was unquestionably a lurid sermon. The Bishop sat with growing sternness of visage throughout the discourse, his sense of propriety alone forbidding him either to interrupt the speaker or to follow with a public rebuke. But when the service was over and the officiating clergymen were in the vestry room,

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he rebuked the preacher in terms that disclosed no inconsiderable wrath in himself. He was proceeding at some pains and some length to amplify and emphasize his displeasure, when the Rev. Ellison Capers, now Bishop of South Carolina, attempted in his characteristic way to alleviate the distress of the unfortunate preacher.

"I think you are a little hard on our young brother, Bishop," he said, as soon as he could crowd in a kind word. "He may have stressed the matter a little too much, but does not Revelation bear him out? Do not the Scriptures tell us that there is a 'wrath of the Lamb' and that it is a very real wrath?"

"Wrath of the Lamb, Capers?" ejaculated the Bishop, with unaltered visage; "wrath of the Lamb? Yes, the Scripture does tell us of the wrath of the Lamb, but it is the wrath of the Lamb—of the Lamb, Capers; while here is a man who is butting like a billy-goat!"

Not in the same spirit but rather in the spirit of Gallio, he once answered a question put to him about the Episcopal apron and its proper use: "I do not know why Bishops wear them. Little boys wear them to protect their clean clothes. Butchers and waiters wear them to hide their dirty clothes. I have had neither occasion to wear them."

About the same time he had to write to one of his clergy a letter which showed his impatience of what he could not but deem trifling with divine mysteries:

"Yours received. I must have failed to convey my meaning, or you must have failed to catch it. I am not discussing with you the question of 'Altar

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Lights,' but I am impressing upon you the importance of not introducing anything that you are not required to do by the ritual law of 'this Church' calculated to alienate good people from the Church. A second reading of my letter will, I think, make apparent my whole animus. You write that 'Altar Lights have been received into this Diocese.' If so, I hope that no confusion and alienation has resulted therefrom.

"I wish that more of the Light of Heaven might shine upon altars and pulpits. It sickens me to think that our minds can dwell upon such little questions, when the great questions of Life and Death are pending."

It was in this spirit that he wrote his Council address for 1888 on "The Words of Christ." He supposed that representatives of all the great Christian Communions were gathered about the Lord, asking Him to answer certain questions that were troubling them and keeping them apart; with teachableness of spirit intent to catch each word that fell from the Master's lips, and in realization of the Sacred Presence refraining carefully from giving offence to one another in word, thought, or deed. He supposed that these questions were put to Christ, and that He answered them in the exact words that He spoke while on earth in the flesh: What is God? May we worship any other? How must we worship God? What is the essential of the Lord's Supper? How shall we pray? What is the efficacy of prayer? Who have authority to rule and minister in the Church? Where are those who have departed hence

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in the Lord? Are there few that be saved? Shall Christ indeed return to judge the world? And is there, in very truth, to be a day of final adjudication alike to the evil and the good?

It was a vast field that the Bishop thus essayed to cover, and in the ultimate form which it took it was in itself a sufficient product for many years. Several thousand copies of the address were printed and, unlike many Pastorals, distributed by the clergy and read. Then for the sermon which he preached at the opening service of the General Convention, which met in Baltimore in 1892, he recast this address, curtailing it here and expanding it there; omitting, for example, whole paragraphs on the inability of science and of nature herself to speak words of eternal life, and introducing pregnant afterthoughts such as these: "The Roman soldiers parted not the seamless garment of Christ; yet will His people causelessly rend His sacred Body." To a passage as it appeared in 1888—"The three Apostles in the Mount saw a wondrous glory in their Master, and could tell of it as eye-witnesses. The nine failed to see it, and could testify to it only upon hearsay—too much the case with ourselves, my brethren of the Ministry,"—he added in 1892 "The nine, who went not up into the Mount, could tell of the power of the Devil; the favored three could tell of the glory of their Lord."

Bishop Wilmer's one book belongs to this period. He wrote it originally without thought of publication, but with the hope that after he had gone the way of all flesh his children and his children's child-

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ren would derive pleasure and profit from knowing the thoughts of one whose memory they cherished, and who had lived a long life during an eventful period of the country's history. But the manuscript was not allowed to remain unpublished. The Mobile clergy had a pleasant custom of going out to Spring Hill one morning of every week, and the reading of portions of these reminiscences became a matter of course. So interested did the clergy become that they united in a request to the Bishop to give his reminiscences to the public, and the Bishop finally yielded. This is the explanation of the unconventional style and frankness of the book which was published in 1887 as "The Recent Past from a Southern Standpoint," and which rapidly ran through several editions, the second being called for within six months from the book's appearance. The contents of the volume vary widely, but invariably they show the individualizing touch of the writer. Loyalty, citizenship, the Constitution, the Civil War, the institution of slavery, ecclesiastical differences, are all treated in a manner ingenuous and with a spirit unexceptionable. The concluding portions of the book are given to character sketches of his father, the Rev. William H. Wilmer; his cousin, J. P. B. Wilmer, Bishop of Louisiana; his predecessor, Bishop Cobbs, "the saint of the Southern Church"; his champion and spiritual father, Bishop Elliott of Georgia; and his life-long friend, John Stewart of Brook Hill. Lovingly and reverently he moved among the graves of the heroic and sainted dead. It was, he testified, a grateful task for

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him to pluck a nettle here, and plant a flower instead; with sharp incision to freshen up some fading inscription there; to remove the moss and lichen with which time was encrusting them and to cause the very grave stones once more to speak aloud the names and deeds of men who should never die from the hearts and memories of those who admire courage and love holiness. The reception of the volume, whose standpoint was so frankly declared, was all that the writer could ask. The Northern press reviews were uniformly of an appreciative nature, the honest intention, the courageous conviction, the manifest ability, and the good spirit of the author being acknowledged.

The New York Times, perhaps the most impartial of American literary journals, said: "It is a good thing for both sections of the great republic to have such a book as Bishop Wilmer's to profit by. The good Bishop is a thoroughly 'unreconstructed' Southern man, and he writes as such. He defends and applauds the course of the leaders of the seceding States. He berates 'that fanatical, and at times dominant, element, which, having waged a destructive war (and for that it becomes me to make no moan,) and, after having destroyed our wealth and laid waste our territory, and revolutionized our domestic and political life, persistently aims at our humiliation, still plies us with ignominious epithets, and, to use a vulgar current phrase, still 'waves the bloody shirt.' He praises Jefferson Davis and his book, 'The Rise and Fall of the Southern Confederacy,' saying of the book that it is 'the ablest and fair-

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est exposition of the question,' and of the man that 'he was a calm, clear-headed, and large-hearted man, chosen in the hour of need for his known merits and on the strength of his history, which was not obscure or ignoble.' \* \* \* The writer's spirit is genial and wholesome, and though, of course, he is devoted to the interests and welfare of the church at whose altars he ministers, he displays no bigotry and no unwillingness to acknowledge all that is good in those from whom he differs." The Church Eclectic said: "It is good for us all, both North and South, to know what so wise and holy a man thinks and has to say about the great questions which have so lately convulsed our nation. Especially for our people at the North it is good to hear sometimes the other side of these questions and to realize how the wisest and best of their Southern brethren feel about them still. No person and no party is ever entirely right, and it is well for us all to listen to those who differ from us and to learn to see the good that is in them. For this reason the Bishop's book is commended to our clergy and people, North and South, in the belief that they will be better citizens and truer Christians for having read it." And the Church Review said: "He says many things that will not command popular approval, nor can it be expected for an author who does not account John Brown a martyr, and who sees in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' an ingenious defence of the institution of slavery. \* \* \* Beyond controversy Bishop Wilmer represents the true heart and mind of the South, which while it holds intellectually to its old theories is no less loyal to the restored

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Union; the war was ended once and forever. \* \* \* He is a man of strong views, some may say, of strong prejudices. He has the courage of his opinions, and belongs to the order of vertebrates."

In the South, the book was greeted with enthusiasm.

Two years later the Bishop republished in a small volume so much of the larger work as dealt with matters purely religious and ecclesiastical. While this was done at the request of many who thought that such a booklet would be of use in popular instructions on the Church it failed of its purpose. This failure was due not to any fault in the book, but to the fact that while every statement in the book was true the book had not been written to subserve the purpose to which it was now put. It lacked that non-controversial tone which, at least in this age, is an essential in popular treatises intended to be used in propagandism. The Bishop himself perceived this fact at an early date, and quietly withdrew the volume from the market.

The Council which met in Greensboro, in May, 1887, took occasion to pay especial honor to the Bishop. He had now exercised oversight of the Diocese twenty-five years, and his loyal followers sought to show some measure of their appreciation of his leadership. On the second day of the Council adjournment was taken at noon for a special service of praise and thanksgiving. A committee presented through Dr. Stringfellow an address in behalf of the Council, and through Dr. Cobbs a set of Robes and an Episcopal staff.



## CHAPTER XIV

### BISHOP AND FATHER

In consequence of his continuing ill-health Bishop Wilmer issued a circular letter, on March 15th, 1888, announcing that he was unable to give the necessary oversight to the missionary work of the Diocese and that he would ask the Council at its approaching session to elect an Assistant Bishop. He did this without conferring with the clergy or laity, and learning what their minds would be with reference to his request. He soon found that opposition was general. 'The diocese had never thought about an Assistant. The time was too short either to prepare their minds, or to select the proper man.

The Bishop was soon convinced that his request would meet little favor if presented to the Council. On the opening day of its sessions he formally withdrew his notification. He assured the Council that he was content if they were content; that he had been moved by desire to further the Church's interests, not his own ease; and that any subsequent alleviation of conditions must originate with them.

Though unwilling to elect an Assistant Bishop the Council desired to give the Bishop all possible non-Episcopal assistance in his work. Accordingly the office of Archdeacon was created, and the Bishop

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appointed to that office the Rev. Horace Stringfellow, D. D., rector of St. John's Church, Montgomery. While retaining the rectorship of his large parish, Dr. Stringfellow was to exercise, under the Bishop, supervision of all missionary operations. This make-shift served to keep the work going two years longer, but in the nature of things the rector of one of the largest parishes in the Diocese could not give the requisite time to personal visitation and inspection.

During this period the Bishop's acute illnesses were becoming more frequent and stubborn, and were less readily helped by lithia water. In the Conciliar year 1889-90 he visited only fourteen places outside of Mobile. It was now evident to all that the well-being of the Diocese demanded more Episcopal service than it was possible for Bishop Wilmer to give. The only question in the mind of Churchmen was as to the proper method of relief: Should neighboring bishops be called in, or should an Assistant be elected?

When the Council met in St. John's Church, Montgomery, on May 20th, 1890, this question had been settled in the mind of a majority of the members. A strong minority wished to get outside help, but the aggressive spirit was in those who wanted an Assistant. Bishop Wilmer himself made no suggestion. He had said at Huntsville, that he would not again trouble the Diocese with the matter, and that any revival of it must come from the Council, and from this line of inactivity he did not swerve even to the extent of express-

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ing a wish one way or another to his intimate friends.

The Bishop was in the city but was confined to his room, and Dr. Stringfellow was called to preside over the Council's deliberations. A Committee headed by Dr. Stringfellow was appointed to wait on the Bishop "with a view of ascertaining from him his wishes as to any Episcopal assistance in the future." This Committee had not been charged to express the Council's wishes; its instructions were to ascertain the Bishop's wishes. The Committee stuck to the letter of its instructions, and with this result: If the Bishop had any wishes he did not intend to take the Committee into his confidence. An Assistant would certainly be necessary some time in the future. Just when, he could not say. His physician had assured him that his present disability was temporary. He was intending to call in neighboring bishops to complete the visitation of the Diocese.

This was exactly the sort of answer that those who knew Bishop Wilmer might have expected. But it did not satisfy the Council that it had done all it could do. At the noon recess the younger clergy and laymen determined to tell the Bishop what they thought, since he would not tell them what he thought. At the end of five hours' debate the Council adopted a series of resolutions declaring that the Bishop needed an Assistant, and asking the Bishop's canonical permission to proceed at once to an election. A strongly favorable committee—the Rev. Messrs. R. W. Barnwell and Philip A. Fitts, and Mr. R. M. Nelson—urged the wishes of the Council upon the Bishop, who was not so opposed to the proceed-

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ing as had been thought, and he gave his consent the next morning, stipulating, however, that his own salary should be reduced to what would be the salary of the Coadjutor—\$3,000 a year, and also that it should be paid only after payment had been made to the Coadjutor.

That afternoon the Council went into an election. Only three persons were nominated—the Rev. Thomas F. Gailor of Sewanee, the Rev. Robert S. Barrett of Atlanta, and the Rev. John S. Lindsay, D. D., of Boston. Dr. Lindsay was a native Virginian, well acquainted personally with the Bishop, and it was known that the Bishop was favorably inclined to his election. It was upon him that the lot fell, but he declined the election.

The willingness of the Diocese to help him made the Bishop more able to help himself, and after Dr. Lindsay's declination he would have let the matter rest, but the mind of the members of the Council had not changed. They were now insistent that an Assistant should be secured, and in response to the strongly expressed wishes that met a letter of inquiry from him, he summoned a special Council for a further election.

The Special Council met in St. Paul's Church, Selma, on October 29th, 1890. The nominees were the Rev. Robert S. Barrett of Atlanta, the Rev. Henry Melville Jackson, of Richmond, and the Rev. Philip A. H. Brown of New York. The clergy elected Mr. Barrett by a vote of fifteen out of a total of twenty-one. The laity rejected him by a vote of fourteen out of twenty-one. The clergy then re-

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tired again for consultation, and failing to agree upon any of the names so far suggested began to turn towards the Rev. Mr. Barnwell, rector of the parish. Only Mr. Barnwell's strenuous objection prevented him from receiving the nomination.

Then the clergy returned again to the church and reported to the laity their inability to come to any agreement. Bishop Wilmer was in the chair. Some began to move for adjournment without further action, but the proposal met with successful opposition. Through much of the debate the Bishop sat apparently oblivious of what was going on, taking advantage of what was often a convenient deafness, and looking over some documents.

In opposing the motion to adjourn Mr. Barnwell turned his back on the Bishop and spoke in a somewhat lower and confidential tone as he brought forward a point which he thought it would be embarrassing to the Bishop to hear argued. "We have heard much," he said, "about the obligation that we are under to furnish aid to the Bishop in his need. But we are under no less obligation to furnish aid to the Diocese in its need. Few places have been visited in the past year. And some places have not been visited in three or four years."

"What is that, Brother Barnwell?" sharply queried the Bishop, his deafness disappearing miraculously.

Mr. Barnwell flushed like a detected school-boy, much to the delight of the congregation; but he turned and repeated his remark very distinctly.

There was silence a moment. "Name one of those

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places, if you please, Brother Barnwell," said the Bishop.

"With pleasure, Bishop! Pushmataha."

The Bishop looked at him, puzzled. Then smiling, he nodded his head, and admitted, "You are right."

Pushmataha, it must be explained, was about the most inaccessible congregation, geographically, in Alabama, far down in the "piney-woods," distant equally from river and railroad, and with dirt roads of more than local notoriety.

After hours of doubt, debate, and vacillation the clergy finally elected Dr. Jackson, and the laity ratified their action by unanimous vote. Dr. Jackson accepted and was consecrated in St. Paul's Church, Selma, on January 21st, 1891, Bishop Wilmer presiding, Bishop Randolph preaching, Bishops Thompson and Peterkin presenting, and all these, together with Bishop Howe of South Carolina, joining in the laying on of hands. To his assistant the Bishop confided the entire work of Episcopal visitation from Montgomery and Selma northward, and supervision of the missionary operations of the entire diocese.

Bishop Jackson threw himself into his new work with his whole heart and soul. For the first two years or more, until his health began to fail him, he did a great work. A man of striking appearance, of great imaginative power, and of rare oratorical gifts, and withal the capacity to reason with both clearness and eloquence, he made a profound impression wherever he went. A two weeks' mission which he held in St. John's Church, Montgomery, shortly after his consecration will never pass from the memory

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of the great throngs that were in attendance by day and by night; and the sermon known as "The Forty Wrestlers Sermon" was by request preached at a score or more of places whither its fame had gone before.

Some of the congregations near Montgomery, but in the portion of the diocese reserved by Bishop Wilmer to himself, wrote to the bishop asking him to permit Bishop Jackson to take the visitations that year. The bishop consented. "But," he said, "you remind me of a revival that once occurred in Virginia. In excess of religious emotion a likely colored girl began to shout and grow hysterical. An old, gray-headed deacon and a stout, bright-colored young man named Jim were close by and sprang to her assistance. The old man reached her first and put his arm around her, as was the custom to prevent the shouters from injuring themselves in their frenzy. The girl opened her eyes a moment, saw who had her, then shook herself free, and shouted to the old man: 'Go 'way fum heah, niggah! I want Brer Jim to hol' me!'"

The feeling that the diocesan work would be well performed operated as a tonic on the Bishop. Instead of wasting away, he became stronger. Released from a multitude of details that had oppressed him he gave himself to a more comprehensive survey of diocesan matters, made diligent visitations in the Southern part of the diocese, and when not on visitations spent many hours every day writing letters of counsel, advice, and comfort to his numberless friends or preparing articles for publication in the

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Church press or in tract form. Amidst these occupations, numerous and absorbing as they were, he found time to advise and counsel with the many that sought him out in his official capacity, and to speak sound words to them that came as to a friend. A young man of excellent education offered himself for the Ministry.

"Can you read?" asked the Bishop.

The young man was offended, and gave a very decided reply. The Bishop simply opened a Prayer Book at random, and bade him read the Gospel. The young man read a few sentences in a halting, lifeless, unimpressive, unreal way, though pronouncing every word distinctly.

"There—that will do," interrupted the Bishop. "When you have learned to read come back, and I will be glad to receive you."

A year passed, and again the young man presented himself. This time he read naturally, as if he felt and would make others feel the reality of what he was reading. The Bishop immediately enrolled his name, and turning to him, said,

"My boy, it is given to some to preach well, and to others to preach not so well. But good reading is a thing that every one can attain with labor, and none can attain without labor. A mountebank will spend months learning to balance a sword on his nose, or himself on a wire; and it is a shame that the services should be mutilated and the Scriptures robbed of significance by lack of a tithe of such application by them that are to exercise the ministry of reconciliation. I have determined that I will never



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again condone the hiding of the Gospel. A young man has got to know how to read before I ever ordain him."

What the Bishop preached he practised. To him the services and the Scriptures were freighted with meaning, and it was the duty of the clergy to find out their meaning and express it. No one ever heard him give wrong emphasis. Prayer, hymn, and revelation were flooded with new light when he conducted the service. And all this was because he was intelligent enough to find the meaning, diligent enough to learn the exact tone that fitted the sentiment, and spiritual enough to keep his rendition of familiar things from degenerating into empty formalism. Sinai became almost palpable when he read the Commandments; and while the peculiar force of the last words of the Fourth Commandment, "hallowed it," echoed in men's minds many of them thought more than once before they remained at home the following Sunday.

In the ordination of priests none will ever forget the solemnity and searchingness of the "charge," as he read it. In Confirmation he did not attempt to finish up a maximum number in a minute; his hands rested a perceptible time on the head of each person, and confirmation was a veritable benediction to the candidate. He could not tolerate the glib recital of the Declaration of Absolution now, unhappily, so prevalent. He insisted on a pause after "pardon," and another after "from." "Otherwise," he taught, "you say 'pardon from your sins,' which is nonsense. Besides, a pardon and a deliverance are two different

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things, and you ought to make the distinction by your rendition of the sentence."

Edwin Booth's famous criticism of the clergy, "We actors render the unreal as if it were true, and you clergymen render the true as if it were unreal," had no application in the case of Bishop Wilmer. A professional elocutionist, a retired English actor, who was travelling through England and the United States giving instruction in the reading of the service, came to Spring Hill and was gladly welcomed by the Bishop, who wished to learn all that could be taught him. After staying several days longer than he usually did the instructor refused at first to accept the fee agreed on (\$50.00), saying that he had learned more from the Bishop than he had been able to teach him.

One of his young neighbors on "the Hill," a spiritual daughter, came with a request that he would officiate at her marriage in the Bishop's own chapel, St. Paul's. The Bishop readily consented. He then gave the young lady his blessing and words of fatherly interest. Finally he asked,

"Daughter, is your intended a Churchman?"

"Oh, yes, Bishop."

"That is well."

"But he is not confirmed."

"That is not well. You are not really going to marry him until he is confirmed?"

"Why not?"

"Because he has not yet come to years of discretion. You surely would not marry a man till he comes to years of discretion."

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"Why, Bishop, what do you mean?" asked the little woman, with just the trace of offence in her tone.

"I mean this: Your intended was baptized in infancy, and at that time he made by his sponsors a promise that when he had come to years of discretion and had learned his Christian obligations he would come to the Bishop to be confirmed by him. As he has not yet come I am warranted in believing that he has not yet come to years of discretion, and is therefore too young to marry. Now, daughter, tell the young man what I have said."

It was unnecessary, by this time, to ask her to do this, for she was as indignant at the Bishop as it is proper for a beautiful young lady to become at her Bishop.

The young man took it in better part than she had expected. He called upon the Bishop, engaged in serious conversation with him, and, when the Bishop officiated at the marriage a few weeks later, had proved, according to the Bishop's own measure, that he had "come to years of discretion."

On this same subject the Bishop wrote some years later (1898) in relation to one of his sons who, when he was about to be married, had promised to be confirmed some time later:

"I wrote him that the Church is a wise mother and does not provide matrimony for her children until they have reached 'years of discretion.' Then they are confirmed and may think of matrimony. However, there are few conditions in life that are more sad than those of being a 'confirmed old bachelor!'"

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Notwithstanding his diocesan activities the Bishop always exercised a general supervision over home affairs. The premises were carefully watched, and the tools kept in a dry place. Always betterment and economy went hand in hand, and generally on the principle that steady betterment was the truest economy. Fences did not fall in pieces before they were repaired, nor did the wood become black with weather stain before a new coat of paint was applied. In hiring servants the rule was adopted of not trying to get them for the least amount of visible expenditure. For example; one day an honest-faced negro man applied to him for the position of gardner, and the wages that he asked were the ordinary neighborhood wages, though he acknowledged that he had a wife and several children dependent upon him. The Bishop declined to employ him on such terms, saying, "With that large family you cannot live and be honest on such a sum. I will double it." And the man fully justified the Bishop's wisdom by serving him honestly many years.

The interest and care that he manifested towards things about home were not confined to material matters. He had lost before he went to Alabama, one child in infancy, and this had been the only affliction his long married life had known. His children were now all at man's estate, winning their way in the world, and all three of them were happily married. He wrote to one of his sons in 1898: "My heart overflows with gratitude. When did a father have so much to be thankful for? When I came to the Hill thirty-six years ago I bought a lot in the

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cemetery and not a sod has been turned." The tenderness he had always shown his children he gave in full measure to his grandchildren. They called him "Big Pa" and he was their comrade in many of their outdoor sports, for which he had by no means lost his relish. Within doors, also, they enjoyed with him the pleasures of the billiard table; but none of them could play as good a game as he. He was their companion and their confidant to whom they could unbosom themselves with assurance that he understood their troubles.

One of the crowning joys of the Bishop's life came in this period, when on October 6th, 1890, he and Mrs. Wilmer celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding. The occasion gave opportunity to hundreds of friends to express the affection in which they held the Bishop of Alabama and his beloved wife. The unfailing sympathy with which the Bishop had met men of every degree, and the graciousness and gentleness of manner manifested by Mrs. Wilmer in the course of the many journeys which she made with the Bishop, had drawn many hearts to them in these later years in addition to the life-long friends of their youth. Messages and gifts came from friends within and without the diocese, from the official bodies of mission stations and parishes, from bishops and other clergy in the American Church, and from across the sea. No record was kept of the number of gifts, but a schedule in the Bishop's own hand-writing shows that a total of more than thirteen hundred dollars was sent in gold coin. The flood of expressions of good will, so free

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and so spontaneous, touched the aged couple deeply, and incidentally furnished the Bishop, who acknowledged the gifts, the opportunity for many of his tenderest and most playful letters.

Of this period one who knew him well gives the following information: "At 78 years of age I have seen him beat the best ten-pin player in Virginia, using the largest balls that were ever made, and scorning to put his fingers in the holes; saying that they were very well for women and children. He rolled the heaviest balls with ease, even making as many as six strikes consecutively. When nearly 80 years of age he beat me at a game of billiards, three balls, when he had 18 points to go and I had only one. When nearly that age he has hunted with me behind the dogs from seven o'clock in the morning until too dark to see a bird."

Great as was the physical activity which this shows the mental was even greater. It was his rule never to retire at night until every letter that could be answered that day was answered, and all his material interests were in such shape that if he should die in the night there would be no hitch in the morning. Up to his last illness he made a habit of repeating poetry so that his memory would not fail; and one of his pleasures was to lie in bed at night and amuse himself translating into Latin the account of the various happenings of the day. These things as well as the practice of deep breathing which has been mentioned before he did every night.

Four months in every summer the Bishop returned to Virginia, drinking the waters of Capon

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Springs several weeks, but sojourning mostly at Winchester, Charlottesville, Berryville, Alexandria and Richmond. His grip on diocesan affairs did not slacken in the summer, and his daily mail was an obligation as sacred as his daily prayers. A letter rarely remained unanswered forty-eight hours, only illness or the necessity for mature consideration carrying it beyond the day of its receipt. He said that any one familiar with the duties of a bishop knows that his days of vacation are not days of idleness. His large and ever increasing correspondence calls for an amount of daily labor which can be appreciated by those only who occupy a like position. Of bishops he quoted the Latin saying: "*Locum, non laborem, mutant, qui trans mare aut terram currunt.*"

He never reported the summer work out of the diocese to his Councils, but merely said: "Suffice it to say that I preached and ministered the Sacraments as occasion offered." He did not say, what was the fact, that he generally made the occasion. When at the Springs he always conducted a short service in the parlors immediately after breakfast, and spoke a few words of exhortation. Never a Sunday passed that he did not preach somewhere to somebody. When he was at Alexandria he would often drive out to the Seminary and hold service for the students. Of his last visit to the Seminary Dr. Cornelius Walker thus writes:

"At one of these visits he was asked to preach to the congregation in the chapel, and there was something peculiarly impressive in his rendering of the hymn,

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‘ I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Come unto Me, and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast.’

The sermon following was in the same line of thought: Jesus Christ, the ground of all human experience, the source of all human blessing. At the last of these visits, not very long after, there was no formal service or congregation, but a gathering of professors and students in the prayer hall. His address was mainly to the students, putting before them the real work, as contrasted with the ideas, and anticipations, and efforts of too many in their peculiar position. It was the almost closing testimony of one in a long service to the Master, who had been tried and not found wanting. Nearly sixty years before I first heard him in the Seminary chapel. My last meeting with him was in the same place.”

As at home so on vacation the Bishop found time to lighten labor with playfulness. Spending some weeks with life-long friends, and feeling that he could exercise a freedom denied in more formal guesthood, he one evening called for a cuspidor, took a quid of tobacco out of his pocket, and began to chew. When bed-time came the daughters of the house, according to their wont, kissed their elders good-night. When they came to the Bishop they kissed him where they had not kissed him before—on the forehead. The Bishop sat up late that night in his room, and evidently found consolation in the following verses, his only attempt at metrical composition:



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"Let him who will tobacco chew  
Take care to ladies' lips eschew,  
Yet, nathless, if it must be so,  
He has, in lieu, a quid pro quo."

It was in a cemetery near the house where this incident occurred that he commented upon an inscription which in view of subsequent developments had caused some comment. A disconsolate widower had erected over the grave of his recently deceased wife a handsome stone on which was the inscription, "The light of mine eyes is gone from me." Very shortly after he was comforted by another wife, and some one asked the Bishop if he did not think that an inscription so glaringly inappropriate should be chiselled off.

"Oh, no," responded the Bishop; "The inscription is not at all inappropriate. It is only incomplete. It needs but the addition of another line: 'But I have struck another match.' "

Friends wrote to him about many things—Christian Science, Sanctification, Free Silver, Ritualism, Stock Gambling, Church Choirs, and what not, and having convictions about all matters that came to judgment, he unhesitatingly answered them with all frankness. From Charlottesville, Va., on August 5th, 1893, he wrote to a friend in Alabama who had made much money in the Mineral Regions:

"My dear and constant friend,

"We are told on good authority to return good for evil. Therefore I will write this letter so that the wayfaring man may not err therein.

"There is one advantage in undecipherable writ-

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ing, viz., that you cannot fasten on the writer any expression that he may choose to disclaim. I made enough out of your letter, however, to satisfy me that you did not have on the 'Saffron Bag.' I have just re-read 'The Caxtons.' If you read it years ago, you did not fully take it in. One must have passed his three-score years to appreciate 'The Caxtons.' It is almost inconceivable that the author of 'The Caxtons' could have written 'Eugene Aram.'

" \* \* \* Our bottom difficulty lies deeper than in the financial embroglio. It is in our want of thrift and economy and industry. Intensive farming, simple habits, frugal living, staying at home and setting hens, etc., will make our rural population comfortable. But, what with our base-ballings, excursions, fairs, political gatherings, picnics, *et it omne genus*, our people spend all their earnings; and then comes paternalism, and pap-sucking.

"I met with the case of one man who mortgaged his little farm to get money to go to Mardi Gras—the very time when he ought to have had his coat off planting corn and potatoes. Of course he is now a member of the 'Farmer's Alliance,' and, like the Irishman when asked what party he would join, 'agin the Government.' So it is now, has ever been, and ever will be.

"We lose sight of the real cause of our troubles by looking too far away. They lie close to us, very near at home. The whole question of Political Economy (and of many other complicated questions) is reducible to a few plain principles. If you cannot enlarge your numerator lessen your denominator. As Car-

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lyle puts it: 'The fraction of Life can be increased in value as well by lessening your denominator as by increasing your numerator. \* \* \* Make thy claims of wages at zero; then put the whole world under thy feet.' If you can't buy a new coat, patch the old one. The French peasant lives on a few rows in the landlord's field. When he takes up a plant he puts in a seed.

"I do not pretend to understand the 'Silver Question,' but I do understand this much: That the Government—which alone has power to issue money—should have sense enough to know, approximately, how much currency is necessary to meet the needs of the people—that whether it issues a copper-piece, a silver-piece, a certificate, or a bank-note, it should be good for what it purports to represent. Any honest man would not issue promissory notes of different values for the same sum. Does not a large part of our financial embarrassment grow out of the lack of identity of value in the several issues of currency?

"There was a great gathering in New York some time ago—an assemblage of Wall Street men with a Bishop as Chairman, met to protest against the New Orleans Lottery. Merciful Heavens! Is the cry of 'Stop Thief!' equal to their protest? I once looked in upon that pandemonium, that menagerie of bears and bulls, of lambs and wolves. What a spectacle! What a huge gambling den! A large part of our financial trouble comes out of that Pit. You may think me an 'Innocent.' God keep me so. What becomes of the minnows and perch in that maelstrom of sharks—!

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"I open the Divine Word: 'They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.' I preached on that in Birmingham whilst the boom was at its height. I felt at the time that I might as well have stood in the face of Niagara and softly sung, 'Flow gently, Sweet Afton.'

"No, my dear friend, subside. You have been in 'The Narrows,' down 'The Falls,' in 'The Whirlpool.' Now, flow gently toward 'The Sea.' You have not been selfish; you have irrigated the banks by which you have flowed; now for the peaceful haven where you may cast anchor. I have great hopes of a son that loved and still loves his father. I heard of an old sailor who had breasted many a storm, and had found refuge at last in the hospital for aged mariners. There the Prince of Peace had given rest to his tempest-tossed soul. The Chaplain came to him: 'How now, Jack?' 'In sight of land' the old tar cheerily responded. Next day: 'How now, my hearty?' 'Rounding the cape, sir.' The last day: 'How now?' 'Drop anchor. Safe in Port.' Is life life worth living? That life was.

"Anniston stands out conspicuously and alone for its large-hearted liberality. I feel that the Divine blessing rests upon it; and none the less but rather more, for the cloud that now hangs over it. There has been too much sunshine; consequently a drought. Showers of blessing come out of the clouds. I never knew anyone to be blessed through prosperity, but, oh! the numbers, the multitudes, who have been purged of their dross in the furnace of adversity.

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“ \* \* \* I want to see you all once more in the flesh. Maybe I may.

“Affectionately,

“Richard H. Wilmer.”

As time went on the Bishop's interest in public affairs drew him to an advocacy of some of the doctrines of the Republican party. He wrote his son, William Holland Wilmer, November 11th, 1896: "I was gratified with the result of the election. The Republican party is not altogether the same party that fought the South. Yet I fear greatly one thing. Man is '*usque in extremum*,' either unduly depressed or excited—hard to say which is most to be deprecated. There is now an overproduction of manufactured goods, or cotton and iron. Under the influence of the present popular and encouraging election there will be a sudden increase of production, not called for by commensurate demand (which is the only wholesome production according to sound principles of political economy). In a word there will be a boom—an abnormal inflation, which is always followed by a corresponding depression. Few people, even politicians, look at the fundamental principles of affairs. There are many politicians, and few statesmen. McKinley belongs to the latter class. The only safeguard now is his policy of protection. Europe has dumped her excess of labor on our shores. It becomes a necessity that we provide them with labor. That can only be brought about by protection, which shuts out or lessens foreign competition. This seems to be our only defense against foreign immigration—by giving

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employment to foreign labor on our own shores; there would seem to be a poetical justice in this mode of retribution."

He wrote to a friend who had asked his opinion about a very embarrassing matter—the necessity of decreasing the minister's salary. It will be noticed that he is still impressed with the methods of increasing the value of a fraction:

"The case presented has but one proper solution. It would be a breach of faith to use trust funds for current expenses. Besides, in a prudential point of view, it would be 'Killing the goose to get at the eggs.' Then, to solve the problem, either the subscription must be increased or the expenses reduced. The first is impracticable; the latter, therefore, inevitable. If we cannot increase the Numerator we must lessen the Denominator. I see, therefore, but one thing to do, viz., To say to the rector that, at this time and until things materially change, you can only pledge so much. This is the only straightforward course to be pursued. The great majority of our rectors live on less than you will be able to promise him. \* \* \* We all have to yield to stern necessity. We cannot hope to give our boys a collegiate education and a learned profession. We must put them to work. I shall be compelled to do so with some grandsons, who deserve more at my hands.

"But the learned professions—save that of the ministry—are all overcrowded. We stumble over young doctors and lawyers, and lo! 'a troop still cometh.' "

The friend to whom these letters were written

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consulted two phrenologists a few months later and sent their findings to the Bishop. Whereupon he wrote his friend the following letter:

"I have just read through the enclosed with great interest. Not that I needed any information as to your character, temperament, or tendencies; for I think that I know you better than do these professionals. They have given you a good average, but if I may presume to say so, they went wide of the mark in one particular. 'A lawyer!' You speak but little, say what you have to say, and listen impatiently to long speeches. If you had a partner to expatiate, you would be first rate at a brief.

"Concerning what these experts attribute to the father and mother, on the one part or the other, I can see what you derived from Heredity, and it is very clear you lost nothing by Sheredity. The father had deep convictions, great conscientiousness, and a generous nature.

"But it takes more than any of us to be able to take all our propensions, to analyze and synthesize them, and from the composition and resolution of all these forces, to indicate the resultant. One has acquisitiveness, but that is modified by generosity; and so forth. We can tell what a man is, but to predicate from his combined tendencies what he will be, is not within man's competency. A man may have large capacity, but without a large amount of pride, connected with a high ideal, he will be diffident. Then there come in the items of early environment, the opportunity and the occasion for the development and exhibition of powers. I cannot but think

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that if your cranial examiners would employ their own brains in doing something for the world instead of scrutinizing the brains of others, they would do some good in their generation.

"I have studied phrenology in my time; but I soon discovered that it required more brain than most of us possess to do justice even to the outer lining of the brain. One who could be equal to the task, would be about some graver work.

"But the fact is, that we all appraise our fellows more by physiognomy than by phrenology. The eye never lies; the tongue often does, while the eye is getting the truth. I would rather depend on the general expression of a man's countenance for a knowledge of the man than seek it by examining his bumps. I think, though, that if I could get as favorable an account of myself as these experts have given you, I should be tempted to modify some of my criticism. I was much struck with the similarity, almost identity, between the two papers. These men have a great advantage over us preachers. They, naturally, point out the pleasantest features. We have to dwell largely upon the lower tendencies of human nature, with a view to arrest them. In a word it is the difference between the portrait painter and the physician.

"But they, most assuredly, struck your salient features. They gave you no credit for veneration. There they made a mistake. A large amount of that quality makes one a parasite. A due allowance of it disposes one to revere what is venerable. Your devotion to your father and your country first drew me



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to yourself. As I grow old—Now, if you feel sleepy put this letter down for a nap. You wrote, at least I read, that sometimes you go to sleep over my letters, and I believe you do, for '*Homerus nonnunquam nodit.*' But as I was writing,—As I grow old, two things increasingly impress me, the littleness of man, and the greatness of the good God, 'Our Father.' We judge Him, our Father, naturally and unconsciously by ourselves. He has to speak to us, in His Word, in our own tongue; and our language is too mean, being, as it is, the expression of our own thoughts and affections, to give an adequate idea of Divine love and Divine pity. Two thoughts occupy me: The one, that our Father forgets our sins—we fathers can grasp that:—the other, that He remembereth our infirmities, that we are but dust. We do not fully grasp that, for we forget that our children are children.

"Ah, these Jews! I could write a volume on that matter, and afford you scope for many naps. They are the standing and continuous miracle. They assuredly, 'suck the riches of the Gentiles.' Russia shook them off as if they had been a vampire. Rumor has it that Palestine is mortgaged by the Sultan to Jewish bankers. All of phophecy, so far, has been fulfilled in their marvellous history, and what remains of the unfulfillment hastens to its consummation.

"Phrenology proclaims that you have friendship. To that I can testify; and glad I am, with love to your house, not forgetting little Em, to subscribe myself

"Your sincere friend,

"Richard H. Wilmer."

## CHAPTER XV

### LATTER DAY MINISTRATIONS

When the Bishop Coadjutor's health broke down so far as to render visitations by him infrequent and uncertain, Bishop Wilmer girded himself with renewed vigor, and for two years did an amount of work greater than he had ever before done in the same length of time.

Once more he began to visit every portion of the diocese, and everywhere he was received with open arms. In a single year he visited almost the entire diocese, and confirmed large classes. Owing to the infirmities of age his pulpit powers were decreased, but the loss was fully counterbalanced by the simple directness and spirituality and personal testimony of one who, arrived at the age of fourscore years, stood plainly on the very shore of the infinite. In the gatherings about his chair, wherever he chanced to be a guest, his power to entertain and to uplift had not suffered one jot of abatement.

He was once the guest of his son, the eminent oculist, Dr. William Holland Wilmer, who had taken up in Washington that ministry for the physical vision which his father and his grandfather before him had exercised for men's intellectual and spiritual

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vision. Dr. Wilmer was feeling the desirability of changing his office and residence from New York Avenue, where he was then located, and he took the opportunity to ask his father's judgment as to the best street for him to select.

"My son," responded the Bishop instantly, "there are only two suitable streets in Washington for an oculist—C street and I street."

And the son went to I street.

One Sunday after preaching in Trinity Church, Mobile, the Bishop dined at the house of a parishioner. He was conversing with a number of fellow guests when the host, coming up behind him, laid an admonitory hand upon his shoulder to claim his attention at the next pause. The Bishop turned and looked up inquiringly. The host leaned down to the semi-recumbent figure and shouted in his ear:

"Bishop, let me fix you a little weak toddy."

"Omit the adjectives, Frank," returned the Bishop briefly, proceeding with his interrupted narrative.

Soon after this a clergyman, an old friend, wrote to tell him that, interested in genealogy, he had traced his own descent back to King David, and hoped to go still further. The Bishop responded:

"I myself am more interested in where I am going to than where I came from. You would better think more of Abraham's bosom, and less of David's loins."

Once in Huntsville he was asked if any one had ever got the better of him in repartee. The occasion of the inquiry was an episode which some one had just recounted:

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"A distinguished visiting prelate had catechized a New York Sunday School, and at the conclusion of the catechizing had kindly inquired 'if there was not some little boy or girl who would like to ask him a question.' Silence reigned for a few minutes, and then the hurrying steps of an excited youngster were heard approaching, his speed and excitement growing as he neared the chancel. 'Come along, my little man,' encouragingly spoke the august catechist; 'Don't be afraid, now. Speak up, and tell me what it is you wish to know.' 'Mr. Bishop,' said the little fellow, with trepidation, but with clear, piping voice, 'the Bible says there was a ladder let down from Heaven, and the angels went up and down the ladder. What made them do that when they all had wings?' The Bishop, non-plussed, gave a loud 'Ahem,' flourished his handkerchief as if he had answered the problem, and repeated the question amid the tittering of the audience. He did not laugh; but he did not answer the question.

"What is your answer to the question, Bishop?" asked the rector, Dr. Banister, turning with a smile of amused confidence towards Bishop Wilmer.

"Because it is such a difficult ascent to Heaven that both ladder and wings are necessary," he retorted.

"I don't suppose you were ever checkmated in your life," remarked one who was sitting near.

"Oh, yes, I have been," answered the Bishop; and turning to Dr. Banister, he remarked, "You remember our friend Meade of Virginia? I was his guest on one occasion, when an incorrigibly naughty little

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chap of six or seven was interrupting the conversation by his incessant noise and antics. Suddenly, to our surprise, he subsided, and drawing a footstool close to my side, seated himself under the shadow of my wing. Looking down at him a little sternly, I said, for my own amusement, 'What makes you sit so close to me? I don't like bad boys to sit so near me'; when, to my infinite surprise and confusion, he blurted out in a most offended tone: 'Den why don't you sit further, yourself.' That was certainly a time when I was fairly vanquished."

The Bishop occasionally played with his candidates for ordination, if he was well pleased with their attainments. He was especially fond of asking his younger candidates whether, as a question of exegesis, St. Paul's dictum, "A bishop must be the husband of one wife," made marriage a pre-requisite to the exercise of the Episcopal office, or whether it forbade a bishop to marry more than once. The anti-polygamous nature of the counsel he deliberately ignored until the candidate had answered. He would then have a word or two of pleasant comment on the domestic nature of bishops, as shown by the fact that very few unmarried bishops could be discovered.

The following incident is told in this connection: He was once called to "marrify"—as he always called it—a young clergyman. To do this he was compelled to give his excuse to a prospective host. The host good-naturedly accepted the excuse, and remarked genially, "At any rate, you will not be detained by the young man again in this manner."

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"We cannot tell," answered the Bishop, with a comprehensive expression of opinion. "He may get to be a bishop."

The Bishop's irrepressible tendency to point a moral with a tale was shown on one occasion in Montgomery, when he was in the grip of his life-long enemy, bronchitis. Many friends came to see him, and when they were admitted to the sick room, during his convalescence, the conversation turned naturally,—at least, it seemed to turn naturally—to sickness, to helplessness, to dependence upon a higher power, to desire to depart and be at rest, and to the insincerity of some of the prayers and aspirations of both sick men and well. Whether the conversation drifted to this point, or the Bishop directed it skillfully toward his own chosen port, matters not; but when it had reached this point, the Bishop sought to illustrate the evil of insincerity in prayer:

"There was an old darkey in Georgia," he said, "who was always expressing a great desire to take wing homeward. One night his master went out to see if all was safe, the fires out, etc. He heard the old darkey—'Cato,' by name—praying very lustily in his cabin. The master drew nigh to hear the prayer, and he heard Cato say:

"'O, Lawd, sen' di angel Gabrile down to take po' Cato out o' dis wicked worl'. Cato done tired o' dis wicked worl'."

"His master knocked upon the door.

"'Who—who dar?' called out Cato.

"'The angel Gabrile, come to take poor Cato out of this wicked world,' said the master, sepulchrally.

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“ ‘Who dar?’ shouted Cato, the perspiration standing out on his forehead.

“ ‘The angel Gabrile come, Cato—’

“ ‘Lor’, Gabrile, you needn’t be knockin’ dar. Cato ain’ to home. Cato ain’ been to home dese t’rece weeks.’ ”

One of his anecdotes may be quoted pertinently in this connection: “They who mean nothing by their prayers,” he once remarked, “can easily pray for anything or nothing. ‘Why do you curse so?’ said an acquaintance; ‘you offend me by your profanity.’ ‘Oh, well,’ was the reply, ‘you pray a good deal and I curse a good deal, but the Lord knows that neither of us means anything by it.’ ”

Once at a social gathering a noted man of science was present. In discussing with the Bishop the general subject of man’s place in nature, he remarked:

“I think, Bishop, after a careful study of the subject, that human nature is a failure.”

“Speak for yourself, Doctor,” responded the Bishop, “I have not found it so.”

Sometimes, one auditor, at least, would wish that the Bishop were a little more soft-spoken.

“I like a cheap religion,” said a so-called Christian to him one day. “I have been a member of the Church for years, and I don’t believe it has cost me more than a dollar, in all.”

“Did you ever think,” asked the Bishop, “that you paid a very extravagant price for what you got?”

“Why,” weakly returned the skinflint, “my knees are horny with praying.”

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This man had evidently not thoroughly digested the case of Cornelius the Centurion.

It was such a man, restricting "praying" to "asking," that he had in view when he wrote: "I was asked the other day, 'why is man designated as a rational being?' A hard question. The only satisfactory answer, in view of his irrational conduct, is that he is more select and particular about his 'rations.' I meet the stupid ox: 'he knoweth his owner.' Alas, I meet hundreds of so-called 'rational beings' who know not their owner. But like the ass, they frequent the Master's crib."

But all this, cheerful and vitalizing as it was, was only the by-play of an abounding life, and it came in the moments of relaxation from severer labors of official administration. It eased the Episcopal burden and prevented him from becoming pessimistic as he grew older, and found the same problems and shortcomings to deal with in clergy and laity that he had been struggling with for more than a generation.

At one time there was a good deal of bickering and stone-throwing, after the ecclesiastical fashion, among a considerable number of his clergy, ritual, theology, and personal habits being mutually condemned, and, occasionally, in rhetorical figures. One morning, as the Bishop sat waiting for the train to leave Montgomery, he was discussing the situation with one of his clergy, and suddenly quoted a line from Virgil as being pertinent: "*Tantaene irae in coelestibus animis?*" *Coelestibus?*" he repeated, *Coelestibus?* No. *Detestibus!*"

He found it necessary to be vigilant against world-



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liness, not only among the laity but among the clergy. It is worth while to note the different ways in which he rebuked its different phases.

Of the darker phases of clerical worldliness which have occurred from time to time in all churches, little need be said. They hurt the Bishop as if they were the misdoings of his own flesh and blood; and, indeed, he did regard his clergy as his spiritual children. Whenever discipline was administered it was attended with love, with unflinching sternness; with a word, where possible, of counsel and cheer; but, above all else, with privacy. Cases of suspension and deposition occurred wherein, though the Canons were scrupulously observed, not twenty persons knew what had been done until the official Journal of the Bishop was read at the next annual Council. Consideration for the culprit, regard for the good name of the diocese, and the shame which the father felt for the son, combined to prevent the noising abroad of family disgrace.

Clerical extravagance in ritual, in the few cases that came before him, was ever treated in a kindly but firm and positive way. "Reverend and dear brother," wrote he to one clergyman, "rumors have reached me that some changes in the ritual of your parish church have excited some talk.

"As you well know, I am the last person to dictate in any matter in regard to which the common law and usage of the Church allows latitude.

"The object of this letter, therefore, is simply to put you on your guard. While many things are lawful, they are not all expedient. Great wisdom is

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to be exercised in the introduction of any change, especially in this our day when people are rendered suspicious by the extravagance of some of the clergy.

"And then, again, you are new to the people of your charge. You have not had time to gain their love and confidence. This is an all-important matter for you to weigh well.

"I pray you to consider well not only the proper thing to do, but the proper time for doing it.

"To yourself only have I written on this subject. When I hear anything of my clergy that is likely to work an injury my invariable rule is to confer with them. I have the honor and welfare of my clergy in sacred regard, and I have also, in equal regard, the unity, peace and concord of the congregation.

"I write this, not knowing anything of what is alleged, nor anything of the merits of matters involved; but with the single aim of putting you on your guard.

"Let the peace and unity of your flock be of deeper concern than the gratification of your taste in matters non-essential.

"Of course, in matters of principle—the things essential—there is but one rule for an honest mind. But the shepherd acts not wisely when he needlessly, by dress or gesture, frightens his sheep and scatters the flock."

The same sympathy that he manifested towards clergy and laity he manifested towards them that were passing from the lay to the clerical estate. The examinations successfully passed and the ordination over, it was his custom to use a portion of the day

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following in giving the young men such counsel in pastoral theology as he thought they needed. One such case has been recorded with especial fullness:

It was a hot Monday in August. Three young deacons sat in the study at Spring Hill. They had been ordained the day before, and had now come to the Bishop for a final conference before proceeding to their respective fields of work. For several hours the Bishop gave them instruction in his characteristically informal, discursive, anecdotic way. He took little for granted but his hearers' sincerity and immaturity, and so his discourse covered such points as: "Use black ink in writing your sermons;" "Preach original sermons twice a month; on alternate Sundays read the sermons of some great preacher; and, to keep the congregation from thinking that they are your own compositions, tell them before hand whose sermon you are about to read."

His concluding advice was: "You boys know very little; let that consideration work in you humility. But lest you be overmuch dejected by this thought, remember that your congregations know even less than you know; let that consideration give you due confidence."

Then taking from his desk several slips of paper he proceeded: "I have been in the ministry nearly fifty years and in all that time I have never, as deacon, priest, or bishop, asked for the payment of my salary or lived beyond my income. I want to give you the opportunity to pursue the same course. At least, I want to make it unnecessary for you at the very outset of your ministry to be asking for

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your salary. It will be fully a month before any of you receives his salary, and it will be three months before you receive a check from the Board of Missions. This will tide you over the intervening weeks and enable you to preserve your own self-respect and the respect of your congregations." And with these words the Bishop handed each deacon a check for fifty dollars.

Some of the clergy who had yet to get acquainted with the Bishop would become discouraged when they consulted him as to their methods of work or outlined plans for the future. Almost invariably the Bishop suggested that some other way or plan would be better, and gave his reasons for so thinking. And then when the discouraged clergyman had retired, thinking that the Bishop was either blind or unsympathetic, the Bishop would praise him without stint and commend the work just discussed most heartily. One day the clergyman that happened to remain remarked that he seemed to be inconsistent in doing this.

"Why," he responded, "if you had a child much given to reading, would you not urge him to spend more time in the playground? But if your child cared for nothing but play would you not dwell rather upon the advantage of a well-filled mind, and encourage him in the love of study? Now, that is precisely the principle that guides me in advising my clergy. They do not need encouragement to do what they are already doing, but they do need to have their minds directed to aspects of their work that they do not naturally take to. I urge my stu-

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dious clergy to do more visiting, and with the house-going parson I lay stress on study. This is what I understand to be 'rightly dividing the word of truth.' "

In reply to an obvious objection to such a method of training, the Bishop went on to say that while this course helped to round out many an excellent character he did not believe it had injured any man or hindered any work. "If a man is so easily discouraged that he will desist from his undertaking merely because of what I have to say in off-hand judgment, he has evidently not put his whole soul into it and the project would not have amounted to anything any way."

The Bishop was much exercised about the condition into which the Church music had degenerated in some parts of the diocese. His dissatisfaction was much increased by the performance of one who might properly be called the "leading lady" in a certain choir. After a most impressive sermon by the Bishop on the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, this professional proceeded to sing as an offertory anthem a series of vocal exercises, which made the clergy and the congregation feel as if the Church were full of fireworks and toboggan slides. The Bishop's face was a study, but he said nothing publicly at the time about the grievous anti-climax. Privately he expressed indignation and being asked the effect upon himself answered that it was as though in the glow of his feeling a bucket of cold water had been thrown upon him.

Having reserved his public remarks, he spoke in

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the most vigorous terms at the next Annual Council and to such good effect that thenceforward when an operatic star was to sing a solo in a church in Alabama the attraction was not advertised in the daily papers.

"As for the choir," said he, "their proceedings have been for a long time, and still are to a lamentable degree, mere performances. Indeed, the only legislation of the Church on the subject of music was brought about by the unseemly and almost scandalous doings of the choir. The organist stirred himself to the most elaborate efforts; tunes were selected for the display of songsters in duets and solos. In many instances new and unfamiliar tunes were introduced to prevent the congregation from joining in the worship. Snatches from popular operas were played to gratify the audience. And sometimes, after a solemn discourse music suited to the dancing hall accompanied the steps of the worshipers down the aisles. The picture is not at all overdrawn. It was the travesty upon worship. So much so that I have been tempted at times to rise and proclaim: 'Take these things hence; the Father's House is the House of Prayer.' The whole performance seemed to be for the glory of the choir, with but faint memory of the Most High God. And the difficulties of managing choirs had become proverbial. I remember, on one occasion, to have heard the late Bishop Meade of Virginia say to a young clergyman, who had asked him if he could tell him how to manage his choir: 'No, I cannot. Forty years long have I been grieved with this generation.'"

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On the eightieth anniversary of his birthday, March 15th, 1896, Bishop Wilmer preached in Christ Church, Mobile. A congregation of twelve hundred occupied every seat in the church. Two-thirds were men, whom especially the Bishop had requested to be present, and to whom in particular his sermon was addressed.

The text was Psalm 119: 9: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word." The optimism of the strong young men before him was not surpassed by that of the aged preacher. "I find no period that, on the whole, compares favorably with the present," he declared. "We look around upon the large number of unreligious men in our midst. The prevailing impression is that there is a growing indifference on their part to religious truth. Not so. I can well remember when, in the 'Old Dominion,' infidel opinions were looked upon as the suitable finish to a polite education. It is difficult for me now to recall instances of avowed faith among cultivated men a half century ago. At the present time it is much the reverse."

Premising then, that progress was on the whole towards good, he dealt with the obstacles to this progress, speaking plainly of the evils of present-day life, and condemning as the worst of these, that double standard of morals for man and woman which makes not woman's higher, but man's lower.

"You would look with horror," he said, "upon a woman whose mouth was filled with profanity and impurity. Why? Because it is vulgar and im-

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pious, and indicates an impure heart. What law or reason renders that respectable in a man which would take away all charm from the character of a woman? Why should not the woman be as select in her tastes as a man, and how shall she endure in him what would in her be intolerable to him?

"Smart men," he said further on, "are often sceptical—profound men, never! The merely smart man fancies that he can grapple with all questions and explore all mysteries, even the nature of the Most High and the mysteries of the Divine dealings. He lets down his little line into a subject unfathomable by the mind of man, and when it runs out is wont to exclaim—'I have found bottom!' Short-sighted man! He has only found the end of his line!"

The optimism of the aged prelate went hand in hand with the playful condescension of the ancient grandfather. In the following letter written with his own hand he supposes himself to be the amanuensis of the little girl in whose name he sends the letter:

"Charlottesville, Va., Aug. 26, '95.

"My dear sir,

"You may be surprised to get this letter from a little lady whom you have never seen, and of whom you have never heard. Let me introduce myself. I am a wee one, not three years old yet, am the great granddaughter of one of whom you have often heard—Bishop Meade.

"But though I am a little one I have had, for some time, a great yearning for a little dog pet, to play



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with me, for I am the only child in the house, and I want some cheerful companion a little younger than myself.

"Well, there came to our house the other day a large, fine-looking, good-natured gentleman, a cousin of my Big Pa. I call Uncle Richard Wilmer of Alabama 'Big Pa'—and Big Pa said to this gentleman—'How is Will getting on with his puppies?' And he said, 'Will has only 17 just now.' Well, thought I, here is my chance for a puppy.

"Now, won't you, like a good-natured gentleman, as Big Pa says you are, pick me out a nice little puppy? I mean to call him 'Billy' for you—a black and white little fellow, if you can; and when you come down to Virginia put him in a little box and send him to Miss Fannie Meade, Piedmont Institute, Charlottesville. I will superintend his education at the school, and see that his manners will do you credit for his early raising.

"And I will wish for yourself—I hear you are lonesome—a nice little wife and many little girls—each one to have a puppy to herself.

"Sincerely,

Her

"Fannie X. Meade.

Mark.

"To Mr. W. H. Wilmer."

Also he could at times write a similar letter in his own name, as witness these few lines to a grandson in Washington:

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"Jany. 5, '98.

"My darling Richard:

"It is not often that a Grandfather gets cents (sense) from his grandson. Nobody can accuse you of non-cents, although after you have sent your letter you had less cents than you had before.

"I am going to put them by carefully, and you may have the comfort of knowing that as long as I keep them I will never be out of money.

"I want you to grow up and have, as your Grandfather has, a D. D. after his name.

"But you can put it now, if you please; and what will it stand for?—'Daddy's Dick!' And I will write it to my name—'Dick's Daddy.'

"My love to all. Be sweet and gentle to 'the little girl.' A blessed New Year to you all.

"Your loving Big Pa,

"Richard Wilmer.

"To Master Richd. H. Wilmer, D. D."

The Bishop was able to spend only a small part of the year 1897 in his Diocese. Going to Virginia in the early summer, according to his practice, he was prevented by the spread of yellow fever and the consequent quarantine from returning home until December. Nearly every Sunday of his absence he preached in Washington, Richmond, or Alexandria, or to the young men of the Theological Seminary or of the University of Virginia. When he at last succeeded in getting home the diocesan labors were of the kind a Bishop always has, but were increased in amount by the necessity laid upon him of undertaking

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visitations that could not be made by the Bishop Coadjutor. He still harped on financial system in the missionary work. He emphasized in words both spoken and written the danger of the present day tendency to parochialism, and urged as the only cure for the disease diocesanism. His capacity for continuous labor is shown by this notice of a week's visitation about Birmingham:

"On the morning of Sunday, March 27th, (1898) he preached in the Advent and confirmed 17 persons. In the afternoon he preached in St. Mary's and confirmed 10. Both churches were crowded. Tuesday morning he addressed the pupils of the Colored Girls' Industrial School; and Tuesday night he went out to Avondale in a pouring rain and in Christ Church preached to a large congregation and confirmed 7. Wednesday afternoon he addressed the congregation of St. Mary's on Diocesan Missions, and at night visited St. Mark's Church. On Thursday night he preached to young men in the Church of the Advent. On Friday he went to Anniston, where he preached on Sunday. Monday he went home."

In Selma, a little later, on a hot day in July, he was able to stand a service that wore out many not half his age—the service including Morning Prayer, Litany, Sermon, Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, and Holy Communion!

Writing from Virginia a few days later about the work he had done on this trip, he said: "I never had a more cheering visitation than the last, when I stopped at Montgomery, went to Selma, and ordained a Deacon supplying the Alabama River Missions, re-

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turning to Montgomery, conferring with the vestry, preaching, celebrating in public and private, and confirming a class from both churches at the Holy Comforter. What work so fills the heart and elevates the aspirations as the work of the Ministry! I fairly bathed in the love of the dear people. How the heart of man responds to a loving appeal! Commit to memory the 586th hymn. It runs through me night and day. Preach Christ if you would have the demonstration of the spirit: the Fatherhood, if you would bring the children home."

Often his physical weakness was so great that he preached sitting; and on several occasions he gave the manuscript of his sermon to the rector to read, while he himself would from time to time interpolate illustrative remarks.

Visiting a Middle Alabama parish, he was expected to preach, and one of the prominent gentlemen of the congregation had invited another gentleman to be present to hear a great sermon. Unfortunately the Bishop was unable to preach, and the rector preached a sermon that did not quite measure up to what had been expected. The Bishop and the distinguished gentleman were seated at dinner afterwards when the conversation drifted to sermons. One of the laymen expressed a rather emphatic opinion of the morning's sermon, and then asked: "Why do we have so many poor preachers?"

The Bishop gazed at him intently for a few moments and then responded: "Why should you be surprised when you consider the stuff we have to make them out of? We have to make them out of

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laymen, and with such poor stuff to start with, it is no wonder that we do no better."

In October of this year he was Chairman of the Committee of the House of Bishops on the Pastoral Letter which that House addresses to the Church at every General Convention. Bishop Gailor, of Tennessee, was also on the same Committee, and the letter was written by him.

During the session of the General Convention the Bishop celebrated the Holy Communion at St. Alban's Church, Washington City. The spot was made memorable a few days later by the unveiling of the "Peace Cross" in the presence of a vast multitude, President McKinley participating in the exercises. Bishop Wilmer was not present. Instead, he visited the "Louise Home," a refuge for impoverished women of refinement, founded by W. W. Corcoran, and a benevolence that appealed to every chivalric impulse in the Bishop's heart. There, during the more largely attended "Peace Cross" unveiling, the Bishop unveiled the Cross of Christ, telling the women that the last act of the Lord, before his departure, was to provide a home for his widowed mother—"Son, behold thy mother"—and that Christ had provided for them this home here, and another for them when they should be called hence.

Throughout the winter of 1898-99 "general debility and almost entire loss of locomotive power," as the Bishop declared the cause, restricted him to the house. After several months of such confinement he had spirit enough to write to a relative as follows:

"When I was in Washington last our Presiding

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Bishop (Williams of Connecticut)—seventeen months younger than myself—wrote us that he could not be with us because ‘his legs wouldn’t mind him.’ I wrote him, not long ago, that my own legs had been wayward for some time. I reminded him that King Solomon describes the on-coming of the end by saying that ‘the keepers of the house’—as he styled the legs—‘tremble.’ I suggested to him that when the ‘housekeepers’ shook it was a notice to the tenant that they were about to quit housekeeping! A few days after, the papers announced that the good Bishop had removed to another habitation—‘the House,’ I hope, ‘not made with hands,’ where trembling legs give place to untiring wings.”

Many weeks of this time the Bishop occupied in mailing to friends copies of sermons which he published this year on “The Efficacy of Prayer” and on “Confession of Sin, not Profession of Religion.” The latter was a revision of his sermon on the “Pharisee and Publican.” Of this revised sermon an edition of four thousand copies was published, and every copy was distributed—about a thousand by the Bishop himself, and the remainder by clergymen all over the country, who used in the spiritual preparation of their candidates for Confirmation. Of the tract on “The Efficacy of Prayer” ten thousand copies were distributed, first and last, besides the larger circulation which it secured by republication in many of the diocesan and general Church papers. One paragraph will give the gist of the sermon on the Pharisee and the Publican, though the whole sermon would have to be printed to show its strength:

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“How many self-righteous Pharisees there are now in our day, thanking God that they are not as other men, and taking comfort from the thought; and how many earnest and contrite hearts are bewildered because the way of life is darkened by false counsel and Pharisaic pretension. Hence come those pleas, which we meet with at every turn, when we are urging men to come forward and make—not a ‘profession of religion,’ as is the phrase, and a misleading phrase it is—but a confession of their sinfulness and of Christ their Saviour. The Pharisee is an example of the one class: he professed all the religion that he had. The Publican is an example of the other: he confessed his sinfulness and obtained his pardon: ‘he went down to his house justified.’ Strange it is that what is popularly called ‘Bible religion’ should differ so widely from the sacred record.”

The Bishop’s correspondence with his friends was voluminous, averaging ten letters a day. On July 15th, 1898, he wrote to one: “My pen is going now at the rate of eight hours a day. I know not how I keep up, but the Father is good to us.” His letters were far from being always didactic and dogmatic. Wisdom there was in abundance, and counsel, where there were eyes to see; but he always took something for granted in those to whom he wrote. To a friend who asked him to “straighten out” the matter of God’s dealings with Job’s children, a difficulty which seemed to the writer the crowning mystery of the Book of Job, he wrote:

“If you had as many crooked things to straighten

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out as I have you would not bother about Job's children. It may be that Job's first children were a bad lot, and in his last days were replaced by better ones. I have often noticed that when people have no children of their own they are busy in straightening out other people's children. Why not take hold of the present generation of children and help to straighten them out? If you had, as I have, a lot of children, grand-children, and great grand-children, you would understand that I have to let Job's children have the go-by. The great mystery in Job's case is that that wife of his was not taken with the children. Her continuance was the climax of his torture. But, my dear brother, my main struggle now is—and I commend the same to all my friends—to straighten myself out: and it keeps me very busy, I assure you.

"Love to the good wife—you are better off than Job.

"N. B.—From all accounts Job was satisfied. Why should we not be?"

It was not until this year that the Bishop was called upon to deal with Ritualism and Rationalism simultaneously in his diocese. Mild forms of each had shown themselves before, but not until now had they become at all aggressive. Their very presence irritated the Bishop, and early in the year he published an open letter to his clergy in which he spoke his mind without mincing words. As to Ritualism, he said: "Usages and modes of worship long since discarded are finding their way back into our worship, to the great grief of all loyal Churchmen, and the loss of that glorious prestige which she has gained



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for herself in the estimation of large-minded and reverent men. The bowing at the name of Jesus in the Creed, which signifies the expression of faith in His Divinity, is losing its deep significance through the constant nodding of the worshipers. The signing of the cross, solemn token of membership in Christ and the pledge to fight manfully under His banner, is losing its symbolism in its frequent repetition on all trivial occasions. The Invocation of the Holy Trinity has lost its majestic meaning by its frequent use as a prelude to many feeble utterances in the pulpit. \* \* \* \* It does not become one of our clergy to ape usages from alien communions. Try, by life, teaching, and mode of administration, to impersonate the Church's genius. This is honesty and loyalty. In a word—excuse plainness—every honest man will go where he is at home.”

With equal plainness did he speak of rationalism: “Our Lord constantly appealed to ‘Moses and the Prophets’ as the Oracles of God. Never neutralize by your criticisms—the ‘Higher Criticism’ so-called—the indorsement of your sovereign. If you cannot agree with your Master, like honest men throw up your commissions. When He declares—in answer to the question, ‘Lord are there few that be saved?’—‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it’—dare not to intimate to your people the damning delusions of ‘Universalism’ and ‘Eternal Hope.’ The first lie on record of the ‘Father of Lies’—as our Lord stigmatized him—was uttered when he told our first

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parents in Eden, 'Thou shalt not surely die.' And there has been no Eden since. The minister who repeats that lie is more the ambassador of Satan than of Christ. There should be inscribed upon his pulpit, when he enters it, what will be graven upon his tombstone, 'Here lies the Reverend ——.' "

The strong and severe language used in this public utterance was in accordance with what the Bishop deemed his duty under his oath "with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word." In following up his public exhortations with personal and private admonition he was not less explicit, but there was a gentleness and sympathy and consideration that ordinarily made his clergy desire to surrender what he opposed. In official pronouncement it was the "Ordinary" who spoke: in personal intercourse it was the friend and father.

The new theology, as he understood and interpreted it, was abhorrent to the Bishop's whole nature. He came very near holding by the dictum: "Whatsoever is new is not true." His Christian name may stand sponsor for his churchmanship. To him Richard Hooker represented all that is sound and lasting in Anglican Theology. "The Ecclesiastical Polity" was the task of every candidate. In addition to this he required of his candidates only Pearson, "On the Creed;" McIlvaine, on "The Evidences of Christianity;" Wilberforce's Ordination Lectures; Robertson's Church History and Browne on the Thirty-nine Articles. He thought little of Wilberforce on "The Incarnation," but he could not recom-

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mend too highly Liddon, on "The Divinity of Our Lord," and Goulburn, on "The Communion Office." His theology may be thus indicated from the older books. It would be impossible to indicate it from latter-day books, for he read very few of them. One of the few modern works that he read was Bishop Thompson's "The World and the Kingdom," which he pronounced "an epoch-making book." It will suffice to say, that to him the Church of God was divine in origin and, by divine institution, episcopal in administration; that sacraments and sacramental ordinances were not merely symbols of divine benevolence, but were also actual channels of divine grace; that though God is not bound to these channels we are; that the scriptures not only contain but are the Word of God; that heaven and hell are not metaphors but localities; that the fall of man was not up but down; that sin is not misfortune but transgression; and that the duty of the Church is not merely to encourage in the way of life, but also urgently to warn against the way that surely leads to everlasting death.

Independently of modern literature, and by the exercise of his own Christian intelligence, he became more and more insistent on two truths, which seemed to him to be the very foundation of any true Christian theology: the universal Fatherhood of God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the especial inspiration of those Scriptures that tell the very words of our Lord, as against those which give human deductions from and applications of His teachings. His sense of responsibility for the right teach-

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ing of these truths became more acute with the approach of the time when he must close his earthly labors, and made him the more zealous to urge their due proclamation upon his clergy.

On December 11th, 1899, the Coadjutor Bishop, who had become more and more incapacitated for work, announced to the diocesan clergy that after conference with the bishops of West Virginia, Southern Virginia, and South Carolina—Peterkin, Randolph and Capers—he had forwarded his resignation to the Presiding Bishop of the American Church. Under the law of the Church the meeting of the House of Bishops to act on this resignation could not be held for three months. On April 19th, the House met in New York and accepted the resignation. Their action preceded the death of the Coadjutor only two weeks. During these months Bishop Wilmer made few visitations, but he assumed charge of the important parish of Christ Church, Mobile, whose rector had resigned but a short while before. Every day he came in from Spring Hill and looked after the interests of the congregation, and every Sunday he was in the chancel and added a brief exhortation to the sermon of the curate to whom he entrusted the detail work. He interested himself also in establishing a training-school for nurses.

The desire for Christian unity was stronger in him than ever before, and he brought together for mutual conference, early in March, his own clergy and the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian ministers of the city. "My brethren," said the Bishop, after a prayer

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by the venerable pastor of the leading Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Dr. Burgett, "I am nearing home; and as the time comes on for me to take my leave I am more and more impressed by a thought which I wish to give you this morning. I have been moved—by the Holy Spirit I trust—to call you together to give you this thought. We are divided, it is true, but with all our different modes we can and should agree on certain central truths. We can and must unite in loyalty to our common Master. I am more and more impressed with the hope and conviction that God is going to give a blessing to this city. Brethren, let us pray, pray as never before for that blessing. Let each one of us, with his separate congregation and in his own way, pray and work for a great blessing on our city. It will surely come; for is not our Father more willing to give his Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children?" He then recounted the incidents of the Great Revival in Richmond when he was a young man, spoke of the blessing of oneness among God's children, and concluded, "It is our divisions and contentions which cause infidelity. We must hope and pray for the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer, 'Father, that they may all be one.' And this unity is to be brought about by love for each other and for our common Master and Saviour."

About the first of April the Bishop heard that an old friend who lived two miles away was very ill and wished to see him. An appointment was made for the next day. The buggy was not ready promptly, and the Bishop, the soul of punctuality, started out to

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walk to his friend's house. When he arrived he was much overcome by heat and fatigue. He drove home and took to his lounge, where, for a month and a half, he lay in great bodily weakness.

When the Annual Council met in Christ Church, Mobile, on the 16th day of May, he was again in bed after some slight improvement. It was manifest to the Council that his work was at last at an end. Action was taken to meet the conditions. The diocese was heavily in debt on current expenses and the Bishop had in private letters to a number of the more prominent clergy and laymen a few months before stated his own position with brevity and clearness: "While our finances are as they are," he wrote, "we cannot in honor elect a Bishop Coadjutor. I wouldn't hire a negro unless I could see my way to pay him." The Council's action in the premises was characteristic of the diocese whenever it has faced a crisis. In forty minutes a fund of four thousand dollars was raised to wipe out all indebtedness to the Bishop and the missionaries. Permission was then asked of the Bishop to elect a Coadjutor, and the request was granted. A blind ballot was taken by the clergy, who found themselves divided among a half dozen persons; yet in thirty minutes after they had left the floor of the Council to make their choice the selection was completed by the unanimous choice of the Rev. Robert W. Barnwell, of Selma. The Council's whole action was a source of gratification to the Bishop, and the election of Mr. Barnwell was especially pleasing to him.

The newly elected Coadjutor called upon the dying

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Bishop, who greeted him with his wonted cheerfulness. "Barnwell," he said, "you have one qualification for the bishopric: You can smoke!" He was growing weaker day by day, but he was able to transact some business and his mind was clear up to the very end. A few days after Mr. Barnwell's visit the missionary budget for the ensuing year was brought to him and he gave it minute attention, taking into consideration also the domestic conditions of the missionaries. Two weeks before his death he was roused from the somnolent state in which he lay nearly all the time and a letter dismissory was put before him.

"You have only to sign your name here," he was told.

"Let me see the document," he responded. "I never sign my name to any paper that I have not read." And he read it through and then affixed his name, although he was so feeble that his hand had to be held and guided.

He was fully conscious of his approaching dissolution, but seemed indifferent to it. He used to say, when he was in health, that he was ready to go when he should be called, but that this world was a good place and he had no wish to leave it.

Now that the end was near the old humorous habit still clung to him. Almost his last words were in reply to a question one of his sons put to him. Bending over his bed he said, "Father, do you feel as if you were passing away?" A faint smile played about his lips and he answered: "I have never passed away before; I may mistake the symptoms." Pain-

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lessly and without disturbance he gradually sank into death, the end coming early in the morning of June 14, 1900. He was eighty-four years and three months old.

At noon on the following day the body was brought into the city from Spring Hill, and placed in Christ Church, where, before the altar, it lay until five o'clock, the clergy of the city in their robes standing guard in the meantime. A constant procession of all ages and beliefs, Christian, Jew and unbeliever, filed past to obtain the last view of one they had loved and revered so much.

The burial service was conducted at five o'clock in the afternoon of June 15th, under the direction of Bishop Hugh Miller Thompson, of Mississippi, assisted by Bishop Nelson, of Georgia. Only ten of the diocesan clergy were present, the others and several of the neighboring bishops being prevented from coming by the very brief interval between death and interment. The last rites were performed in Magnolia Cemetery, Mobile, where the body was laid to rest in the presence of many hundreds of persons.

In his will, which was made on February 6th, 1899, the Bishop made due provision for the disposal of his soul, his body, and his worldly goods. "My soul," he wrote, "I commit into the hands of my Heavenly Father; looking for salvation only and entirely through the merits and mediation of His dear Son, our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the care of His One, Holy, and Apostolic Church. My body I commit to the custody of my family; only absolutely insisting that my remains shall not be



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interred in any church building or vault, preferring them to be assigned to their Mother Earth, with the blue sky above them. \* \* \* All papers and letters referring to private affairs should be burned, except those of affection, which my children may value some day. \* \* I ask for you, chiefly, an assured interest in the Divine mercy, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Reverence and cling to that Branch of the One, Holy Apostolic Church in which you were baptized and nurtured. 'Fear God and keep His commandments.' Abhor debt. Suffer rather than owe. It is not necessary to live; it is necessary to live honestly. Amen."

On Wednesday night, July 25th, in St. Paul's Church, Selma, Bishop Barnwell having been consecrated that morning, the first exercises of the new Episcopate were a memorial of the great man deceased. Tributes were paid by Bishop Barnwell, of Alabama; Bishop Johnston, of Western Texas; Bishop Capers, of South Carolina, and two of the diocesan clergy. The hymns sung on this occasion were four of Bishop Wilmer's favorites, which he had often delivered effectively from the chancel floor of that and other churches: "How firm a foundation," "I heard the voice of Jesus say," "Lord, speak to me that I may speak" and "Lead, Kindly Light."



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